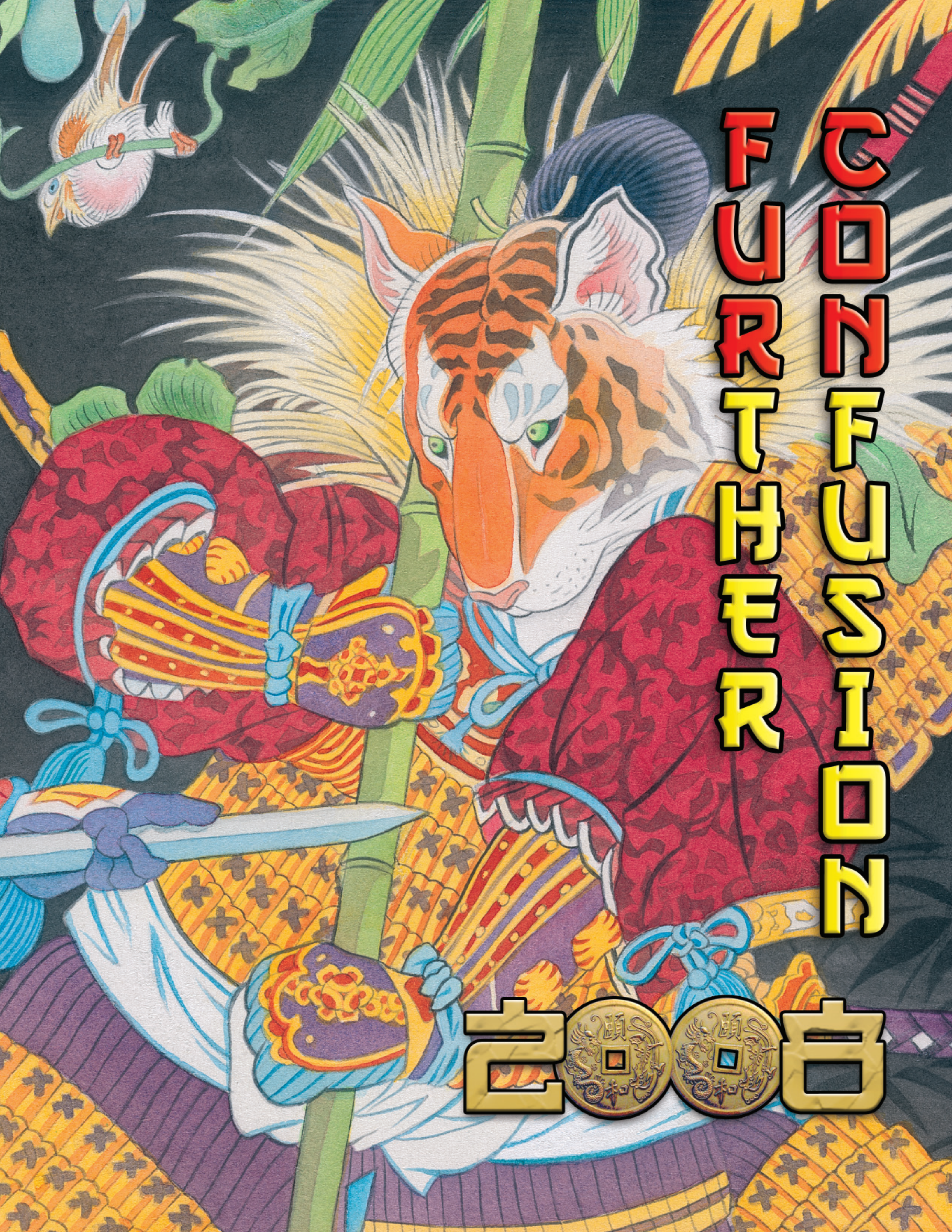


FURTHER CONFUSION

2008

THE FUR EAST

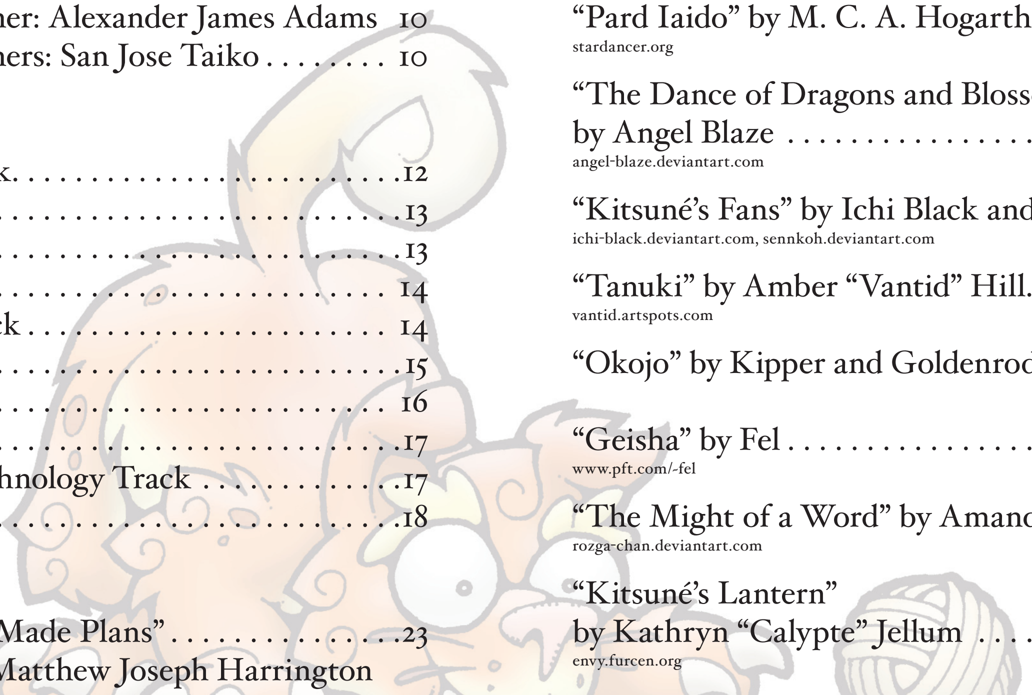
FURTHER CONFUSION 2008

24–28 JANUARY 2008

DOUBLETREE HOTEL

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS



FURTHER CONFUSION

A Message From Our Chair and Vice-Chair. . 3
Attendee Code of Conduct 5
Further Confusion 2008 Staff 28
Cover Art Retrospective Gallery 40
Further Confusion Patrons and Sponsors . . . 54
A Letter From the Board 56

PROFILES

Guest of Honor: David Barclay 9
Guest of Honor: Moira Hahn 9
Musical Performer: Alexander James Adams 10
Musical Performers: San Jose Taiko 10

EVENTS

Exec/AAE Track. 12
Fursuit Track 13
Puppetry Track. 13
Social Track 14
Spirituality Track 14
Species Track 15
Writing Track. 16
Art Track 17
Science and Technology Track 17
Gaming Track. 18

FICTION

"The Cat Who Made Plans" 23
Written by Matthew Joseph Harrington
"Riddley Rabbit Earns a Fortune" 24
Written and illustrated by James L. Brandt
"The Narrow Road in Morning Light" 34
Written by Watts Martin
Illustrated by M. C. A. Hogarth

The Further Confusion Program Book is a production of the Anthropmorphic Arts and Education, 105 Serra Way PMB 236, Milpitas, CA 95035. Web site: http://www.furtherconfusion.org/.

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ARTWORK

"Food Fight" by Moira Hahn . . . . Cover
moirahahn.com
"Foodogs" by Phillip Burgess . . . . .Watermarks
paintyourdragon.com
"Golden Panda" by Rummyhunny 3
mooncat-arts.com
"*Bristled* Special Edition" by Steph Mebius . . . 4
bristled-comic.com
"Panda" by Dean Johnson 6
"Pard Iaido" by M. C. A. Hogarth 7
stardancer.org
"The Dance of Dragons and Blossoms"
by Angel Blaze 8
angel-blaze.deviantart.com
"Kitsuné's Fans" by Ichi Black and Kitara 11
ichi-black.deviantart.com, sennkoh.deviantart.com
"Tanuki" by Amber "Vantid" Hill. 12
vantid.artspots.com
"Okojo" by Kipper and Goldenrod. 15
"Geisha" by Fel 16
www.pft.com/-fel
"The Might of a Word" by Amanda Rozga . . .17
rozga-chan.deviantart.com
"Kitsuné's Lantern"
by Kathryn "Calypte" Jellum 18
envy.furcen.org
"Tibet" by Alek Krominof. 19
furaffinity.net/user/krominof/
"Untitled" by Dook 20
www.furaffinity.net/user/dook
Badge Art Showcase. 21
"They Are There for the Atmosphere"
by gNAW 40
ninjaatwork@yahoo.com
"Rumiko" by Baron Engel 53
backbreaker.com
"Sea Dragon" by Frank Wu 54
frankwu.com
"Breath of Wind" by Smudge 56
backbreaker.com

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

From the Chair:

Welcome!

As the chairman it is my pleasure to welcome you to Further Confusion 2008.

Our convention would be nothing without our guests—and with furry conventions, that is a literal truth! It's you that brings the energy with the sharing of your talents and skills, so feel free to give us your best. Rock our world!

Further Confusion is a remarkable forum for anthropomorphic professionals and enthusiasts from across the nation and around the world. We have only the best personnel on staff to ensure that your convention experience is all you hope for and more.

Further Confusion staff has done spectacular work in planning this year's convention. Over the next few days you will have opportunities to learn and share and enjoy all that is furry. We have great performers, dragons and drummers, and of course animals of all shapes and sizes—all on two legs!

So I wish you all the best. Have a great time! If there's anything at all we can do to make our convention a fun and furrier experience, please don't hesitate to let us know.

—Warm Regards
Bos'n C Otter
Chairman
Further Confusion 2008

From the Vice-Chair:

Thank you for coming to Further Confusion 2008. I hope you are reading this after having had a wonderful experience here, while looking back on great memories. If not, why are you reading this now? Go have fun! See a panel, go to a party, visit gaming, animé, go dance or even get some sleep.

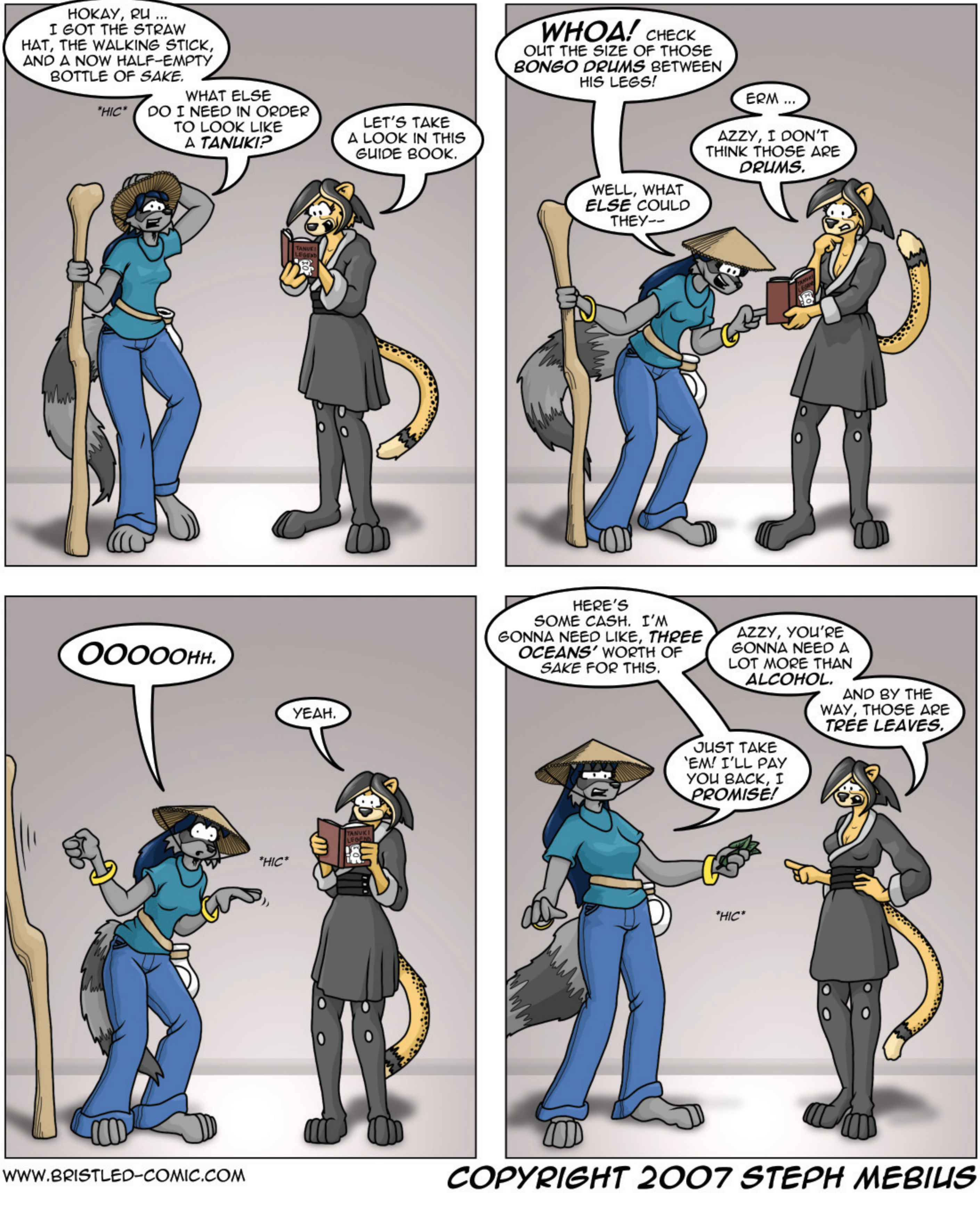
Further Confusion gives us a chance to offer our membership a chance to build great memories. Look around you. Everyone here wants to have a good time, shares many of your likes or dislikes and is a furry fan to some degree. How rare is that? Revel with us and enjoy the opportunity to be part of the crowd.

To close, let me tell you a secret. This year's theme is the Fur East, and I'm responsible for that pun. It was either that or push for a pirate theme so I could suggest "pieces of 08".

—Melchar

Bristled SPECIAL FURTHER CONFUSION EDITION!

"HANGIN' OUT"


HOKAY, RU ... I GOT THE STRAW HAT, THE WALKING STICK, AND A NOW HALF-EMPTY BOTTLE OF SAKE.
HIC
WHAT ELSE DO I NEED IN ORDER TO LOOK LIKE A *TANUKI?*
LET'S TAKE A LOOK IN THIS GUIDE BOOK.
TANUKI LEGEN
WHOA! CHECK OUT THE SIZE OF THOSE ***BONGO DRUMS*** BETWEEN HIS LEGS!
ERM ...
AZZY, I DON'T THINK THOSE ARE ***DRUMS.***
WELL, WHAT ***ELSE*** COULD THEY--
OOOOOHH.
YEAH.
HIC
TANUKI LEGEN
HERE'S SOME CASH. I'M GONNA NEED LIKE, ***THREE OCEANS'*** WORTH OF SAKE FOR THIS.
AZZY, YOU'RE GONNA NEED A LOT MORE THAN ***ALCOHOL.***
AND BY THE WAY, THOSE ARE ***TREE LEAVES.***
JUST TAKE 'EM! I'LL PAY YOU BACK, I ***PROMISE!***
HIC

WWW.BRISTLED-COMIC.COM

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ATTENDEE CODE OF CONDUCT

Further Confusion strives to give as many people as possible a fun time. Most of the convention is for general audiences (PG-13 or less). We will mark clearly the few areas and events which may exceed a general-audience rating. At registration you may choose to sign an age statement stating that you are 18 years of age or older. If you choose not to sign this statement, or are not 18 years of age or older, your badge will be marked and you will be allowed admittance only to those areas or events that are for a general audience. Please be prepared to show your badge at any time you need access to convention space or events—it identifies you as a fully-paid attendee of the convention.

Further Confusion likes to hold itself out as a professional convention. We also hope that each attendee enjoys the fun that our wide-ranging community can provide. Please consider how your actions reflect on the convention and how they may impact or affect others. We take pride in our appearance and we want you to as well, whilst still having fun. To this effect, if the convention becomes aware of any of our attendees engaging in illegal activities, either in convention space or in private hotel rooms, we will be forced to inform the proper authorities.

Although this year we are consuming all of the function space at the hotel, keep in mind that there are always other guests of the hotel, especially on the first floor and lobby areas. Offending the hotel's other guests is inappropriate. Impressing them with how much fun and enthusiasm we have for our fandom *is* appropriate. What you consider to be acceptable behavior may not be so for others. Consideration of others is the hallmark of a mature individual and a healthy fandom. We encourage that courtesy from all participants in our community.

Safety and security matters are generally handled by FLARE, who are a group of experienced individuals used by Further Confusion and other conventions. FLARE can be contacted through Convention Operations (see below) or by asking any of the convention staff. FLARE may ask you to stop an activity or to move it to a private room. Repeat offenders may even be required to return their badges and to leave the convention premises. We ask our attendees always to comply with FLARE's requests promptly. If you feel that FLARE has made an unfair request, or has not dealt with you in a fair manner, you may bring this up at a later time with the convention chair or vice-chair.

COSTUMES AND CLOTHING

Use your common sense in public areas. If you have to ask or think twice about doing it in public, take it to your room. For example, kissing and holding hands, regardless of sexual orientation, are fine. Groping, tongue battles, and nudity, regardless of sexual orientation, are not. While collars and leashes may be worn discreetly, blatant displays of bondage or BDSM in public may result in FLARE asking you to return your badge. No costume is no costume: We ask you to wear at least a shirt, shorts, and shoes in public areas of the hotel.

Body painters should always keep shirts handy at all times in case they need to pass through the lobby or other areas that the hotel's other guests might frequent. Additionally, if you are wearing body paint of any kind, please refrain from sitting on hotel furniture. Similarly, the lobby and hotel furniture is *not* the proper place for decorating someone as a tiger. We have a Creator's Lounge that may be used for impromptu makeup demonstrations. Public exposure of genitalia, buttocks or (female) breasts is not permitted. As a rule, a minimum of a non-thong bathing suit must be worn at all times in public areas. "Anatomically correct" costumes must be likewise clothed.

HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

No means *no.* Stop means *stop.* Go away means *go away.* If someone won't understand these simple rules, contact a member of FLARE. They have the right to remove an attendee's badge for not following these commands. Harassment is any behavior that intentionally annoys or alarms another person. This includes unwanted physical contact, following someone in a public area without a legitimate reason, or threatening physical violence. Offenders may lose their badges and the matter may be referred to the proper law enforcement authorities. If you are being harassed, immediately contact FLARE, through a nearby staff member or by phoning Convention Operations from any hotel phone and asking for FLARE. Convention Operations' phone number is in the pocket program or you can dial 0 and ask for Further Confusion Convention Operations.

BUYING AND SELLING

Further Confusion has two main areas where merchandise and services are sold—the Dealer's Room and the Furry Market Place. Anyone who receives payment for goods or services (such as body painting, massage, etc.) in convention space must comply with all the convention's rules regarding this. The Dealer's Room Rules apply in this situation, regardless of the location, and vendors must ensure they have proper California Sales Tax IDs.

If anyone wishes to request payment for goods or services and to donate the proceeds to charity, Further Confusion must be informed of this ahead of time to allow for the convention to organize the correct tax reporting.

Further Confusion takes very seriously its legal obligations in this area. Any solicitation for payment at the convention that does not comply with these obligations may result in the offender losing their badge and being required to return all payments.

PARTIES, ALCOHOL, AND ZERO DRUG TOLERANCE

Further Confusion does not tolerate serving of alcohol to minors. If you are hosting a party where alcohol is being served, it is your responsibility as host to ensure that the age of anyone drinking alcohol is checked. You should also designate someone not to drink, so that there is a fully competent person present to deal with any emergencies that might arise.

ATTENDEE CODE OF CONDUCT

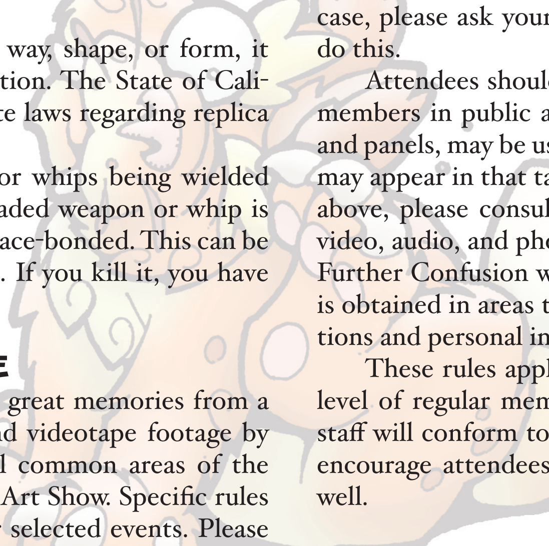
Further Confusion *does not* tolerate the use of illegal substances. The violation of the above rules could subject you to the immediate loss of your badge and convention privileges and referral of the matter to other authorities.

WATER PISTOLS, SILLY STRING, AND WEAPONS

Due to the potential damage to property, water guns, silly string and the like are prohibited in public areas of the hotel or convention space.

If it looks like a real gun in any way, shape, or form, it should not be brought to the convention. The State of California has recently instituted new state laws regarding replica weapons.

There should be no "live" steel or whips being wielded in any area of the convention. If a bladed weapon or whip is part of your costume, please have it peace-bonded. This can be done at the FLARE Base at any time. If you kill it, you have to eat it!



PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPE

Further Confusion wants you to have great memories from a fantastic convention. Photographs and videotape footage by attendees are generally allowed in all common areas of the convention with the exception of the Art Show. Specific rules regarding these matters may exist for selected events. Please consult the program guide at the convention for information relating to specific events. Flash photography will be allowed at the Masquerade.

When photographing or videotaping individuals or costumes, please use common courtesy and ask before photographing them. Please respect their rights if they do not wish to be photographed or videotaped. If someone asks or otherwise indicates (remember many folks in costume do not speak) that they do not wish to be photographed, *do not photograph them*!

Photography or videography for the purpose of sale or publication to the press is expressly forbidden unless written permission has been obtained from AAE, Inc. in accordance with its press policy. Individuals may take pictures and videotapes for private viewing or sharing with friends. We ask our attendees to be courteous to those they wish to take pictures of, especially if you wish to place those pictures or video clips onto a personal Web page or similar Internet archive. In this case, please ask your subjects for their explicit permission to do this.

Attendees should be aware that footage gathered by staff members in public areas of the convention, including events and panels, may be used in a highlights tape and that attendees may appear in that tape without compensation. As mentioned above, please consult the pocket program guide for specific video, audio, and photography restrictions for specific events. Further Confusion will require a release only for footage that is obtained in areas that are not fully public (i.e., private functions and personal interviews).

These rules apply to all attendees (dealers, guests, or any level of regular membership). All members of the press and staff will conform to Further Confusion's press policy and we encourage attendees to become familiar with those rules as well.

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE

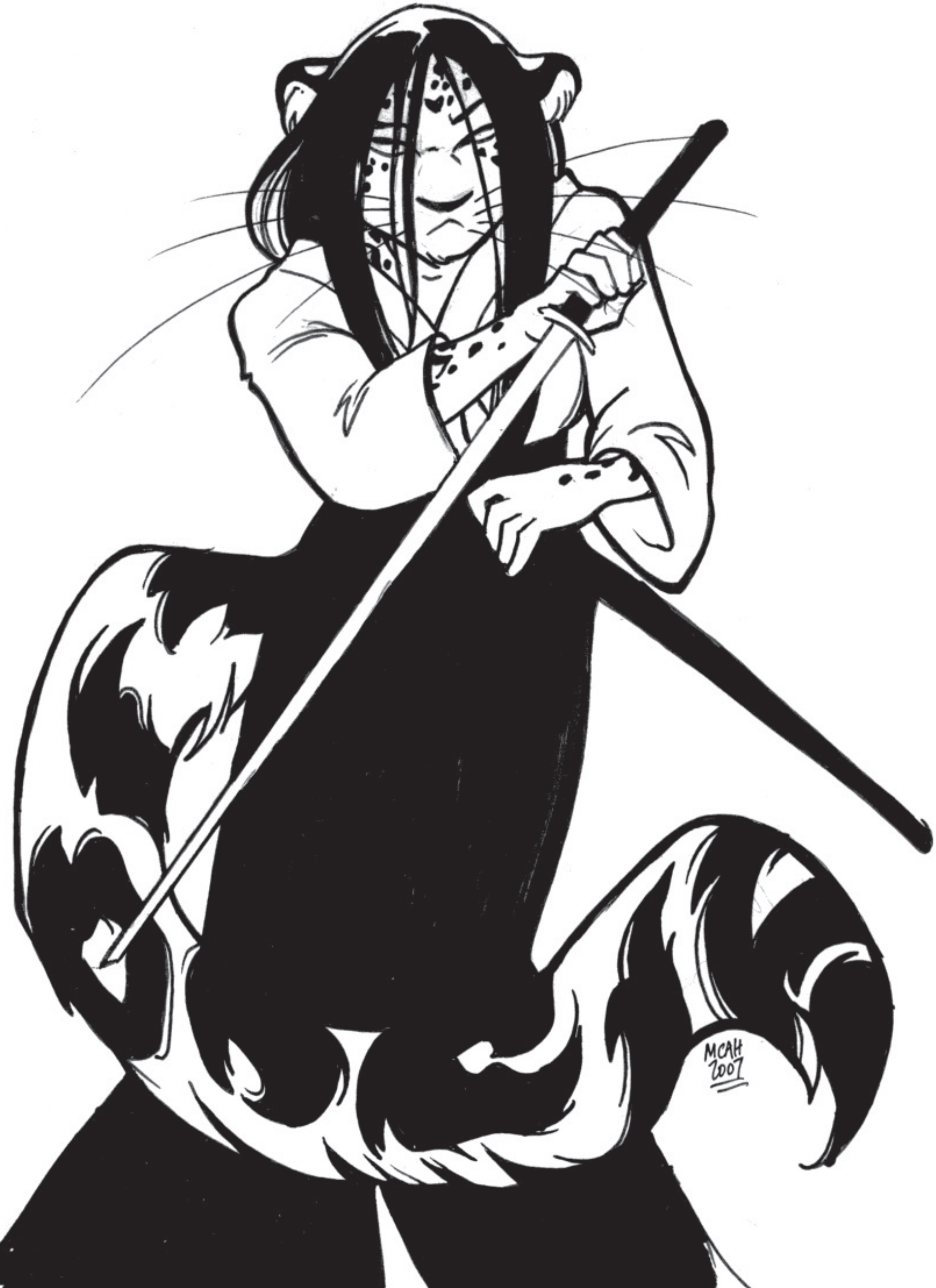
Further Confusion has a Convention Operations room, which is staffed night and day throughout the convention. One of their roles is to assist you if you have any problems whilst at the convention. You can find their location and phone number in the pocket program, or you can dial 0 on any internal hotel phone and ask for Further Confusion Convention Operations; they will be happy to help you in any way they can. Remember, we cannot address a problem unless we know about it.

If Convention Operations cannot assist you directly, they will have someone contact you who should be able to. For less urgent matters messages may be left with Convention Operations to be forwarded to executive staff, although it is not usually possible to pass messages on to non-executive staff. As with all messages left with Con Ops, please remember to give details of how, when, and where the recipient can contact you.

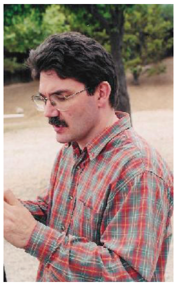
Further Confusion has a large staff to handle most aspects of the running of the convention. This allows the Chair and Vice Chair to remain available to talk about any comments or concerns that our attendees bring to them. If you see them around the corridors, feel free to speak to them—even if they appear harried, ensuring our attendees have a good time is one of their primary roles! If you need to contact the convention chair or vice-chair at any other time, you can do this by leaving a message for them at Convention Operations.

HAVE A FUN AND SAFE CONVENTION!

If you have any questions or comments regarding Further Confusion policies, please send email to *info@furtherconfusion.org*.


MCAH
2007

DAVID BARCLAY



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Which cat is the puppet?

David Barclay is a world-class puppeteer, animatronic designer and supervisor, CG key frame animator, and director and producer of animatronic and puppet projects for film and television.

David was born to actor parents Mike and Ann Barclay. When he was age four, David's parents formed Pex Puppet Theatre, focusing their acting talents on live puppetry. As a child, David performed marionettes and glove and rod puppets with his parents.At age seven, David performed traditional Punch and Judy at the British Puppet Guild for documentary cameras.

Throughout his childhood, David designed, built, and performed dozens of his own puppets and continued performing Punch and Judy into his late teens.

He worked for other live puppet companies, Jactito, directors James and Joan Barton, and Cap and Bells director Violet Philpott.His first work in front of the camera was a brief appearance as a large dog in the British classic comedy series *The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show.* This was in 1978 for Thames TV.

In July 1979 he was offered the position of make-up assistant, working for Stuart Freeborn on *The Empire Strikes Back.* The main challenge was a state-of-the-art hand puppet named Yoda, and David assisted, building duplicate parts, seaming the foam latex head skins, and such, but when Wendy Midener Froud became allergic to something on the set, David was drafted in as a puppeteer. David helped perform the cable controlled facial movements for Muppet master Frank Oz, the chief puppeteer.

When Frank had to return to New York to shoot *Sesame Street,* as the production had run over, Frank nominated David to be his understudy.

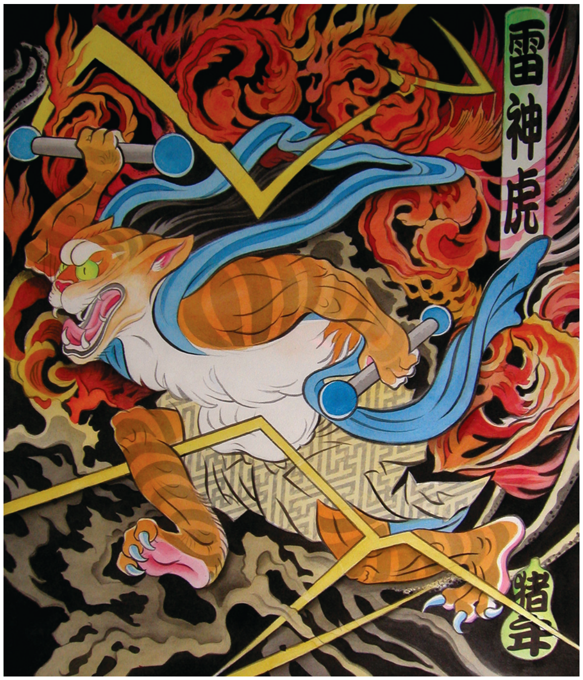
David was then invited to become the first British puppet-maker on an adventurous new project by Jim Henson and Frank Oz, *The Dark Crystal.* In November of 1979, David joined a handful of Henson's American puppet-makers to develop puppets that would finally become the entire cast of the movie. So started his long-term relationship with the Henson Company and the desire to push the envelope in animatronic performance art.

MOIRA HAHN

TOFU ROBOT
SOY POWER!

Moira Hahn, a Boston native, moved west at age 19 to study art in California. After attending California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in Oakland, California, she studied animation at CalArts in Valencia, California. Soon thereafter she flew to Japan and Hawaii to study painting and has looked East for inspiration since, inspired particularly by Persian miniatures, Tibetan Thanka paintings, Japanese Ukiyo-e prints, Chinese guardian figures and Indian animal drawings.

Hahn shows with Koplin Del Rio Gallery in Culver City California, Roq La Rue Gallery in Seattle and Magic Pony Gallery in Toronto. In 2007 her work was featured in her third solo museum exhibition, at the Riverside Art Museum, in Riverside California and in group exhibitions in the US, Canada and Australia.



"Raijin Tiger" © 2007 Moira Hahn.

MUSICAL PERFORMERS

ALEXANDER JAMES ADAMS

FAERIE-TALE MINSTREL

From Dragon's flame and ire will come forth Phoenix fire,
and we will hear the song once more!
—"Life's Flame", Heather Alexander

Unleashed from the land of Fae comes the heir to Heather Alexander's music and magic. AJ Adams is a fiery Celtic fiddler with a compelling voice to enchant audiences of all ages. With songs and stories of the otherworld, Alexander James inspires his audiences to make their dreams come true and look for the wonders within. From tender love songs to rowdy brawls, gentle Irish airs to rockin' reels, AJ brings ancient legends to the mortal world in true bardic style, proving, once and for all, the magic never dies!

SAN JOSE TAIKO

Since 1973, San Jose Taiko (SJT) has been mesmerizing audiences with the powerful, spellbinding and propulsive sounds of the taiko drums. Inspired by traditional Japanese drumming, SJT performers express the beauty and harmony of the human spirit through the voice of the taiko as they strive to create new dimensions in Asian-American movement and music.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN FUR CON
2008 MAY 23-26
THE URBAN WILDERNESS

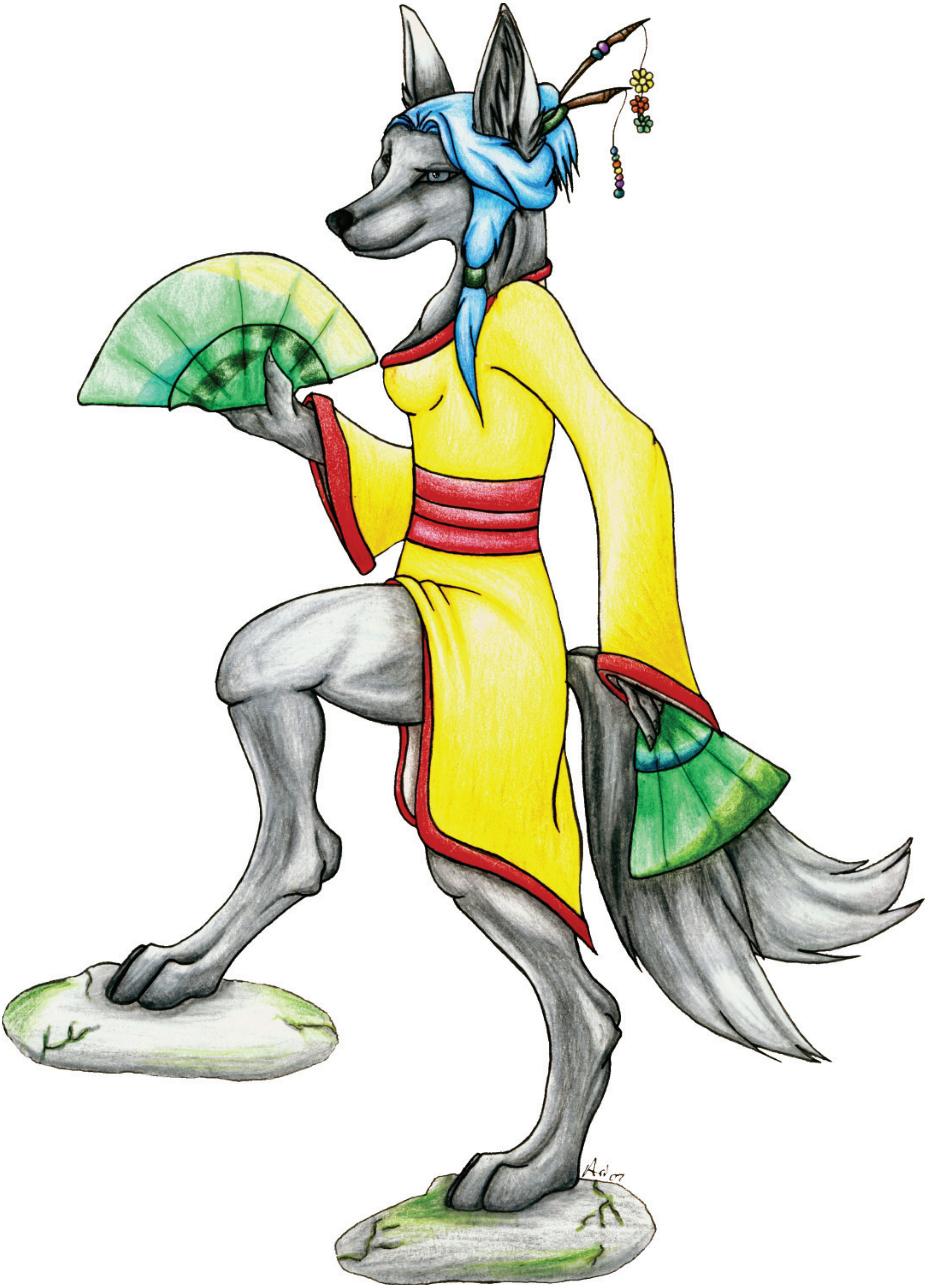
Come to where the concrete meets the claw for a fun filled weekend in the shade of the beautiful Rocky Mountains!

Join our guests of honor LatinVixen and Blotch in the festivities - including our unique fursuit parade down the open-air 16th Street Mall.

Luskwood from Secondlife is back again this year for those of you who prefer digital fursuits.

Our artist and dealer areas are expanded this year as we move to our new home - the brand new Hyatt Regency Hotel.

WWW.ROCKYMOUNTAINFURCON.ORG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EXEC/AAE TRACK

EXEC/AAE TRACK EVENTS

Opening Ceremony See Further Confusion '08 begin!

Intro to Furry Fandom A panel for both new fans and long-time furs. Pick up tips on how best to enjoy your experience at Further Confusion.

Wildcare How do you rehabilitate wild animals without being in the wild? A daunting question, but one Wildcare has found the answer to. Come hear a representative from this extraordinary organization explain how they can manage to help and heal wildlife creatures in the urban heart of Marin County, California.

Kaffeeklatch With Alexander James Adams Join Alexander James Adam in a more intimate discussion setting. Space limited to twelve (12) people. A sign-up form will be at the info desk at 6 PM Thursday January 24.

Professional Puppeteering Moving from amateur puppeteering to the world of the professional is challenging, but not impossible. The industry has seen great changes over the years, with the advance of computer graphics in the movie industry as well as advances in animatronics. Guest of honor Dave Barclay will discuss his experience moving into the professional realm, as well as the current state of the industry.

House Rabbit Society The House Rabbit Society is dedicated to the proper care and keeping of pet rabbits, including rescuing rabbits not receiving the care they need and making them available for adoption. In this panel, a representative will discuss the organization's impact on the community and the lives of our long-eared furry friends.

Kaffeeklatch With Dave Barclay A chance to meet our guest of honor in a small group session. Come sit with Dave Barclay in a more intimate setting and enjoy coffee and conversation. Space limited to twelve (12) people. A sign-up form will be at the info desk on Friday January 25 at noon.

Animal Costuming As we draw animals in an anthropomorphized state, often we'll clothe the animals as part of the changes we make. We see this in all forms, particularly in some of the Eastern-themed artwork, where tigers in kimonos seems more the norm than something unusual. Guest of honor Moira Hahn will discuss techniques and issues with adding clothes to the animals in her artwork.

The Outabody™ System The Outabody Suit is an exo-skeleton input device designed to fit most adults. It maps movement from actor to virtual character—without optical markers or special environments. It streams signals into the software package without the need to pre-process motion data. Guest of honor Dave Barclay will demonstrate the technology and discuss its application to modern puppeteering.

Kaffeeklatch With Moira Hahn A chance to meet our guest of honor in a small group session. Come sit with Moira Hahn in a more intimate setting and enjoy coffee and conversation. Space limited to twelve (12) people. A sign-up form will be at the info desk on Saturday January 26 at noon.

Becoming the Character "Method acting" is a well-known technique employed by traditional actors to "become the characters" they are performing. How much does this technique extend to costumed and puppet characters? Does the performer in these situations have the opportunity to attempt to become the character in the same way as a traditional actor? Guest of Honor Dave Barclay will discuss these issues in the context of his puppeteering work.

History of Tea Tea has been around for ages and still hasn't gone out of style. Come talk about the beginnings of tea, what types there are, and why it is still popular today.

San Jose Taiko Drummers San Jose Taiko performers express the beauty and harmony of the human spirit through the voice of the taiko as they strive to create new dimensions in Asian-American movement and music.

Rattie Ratz Rescue Rattie Ratz Rescue is a network of dedicated volunteer foster homes. These private individuals give graciously of their time and space within their homes to temporarily care for rescued rats while they await placement into permanent homes. Join some volunteers to learn more about this charitable organization.

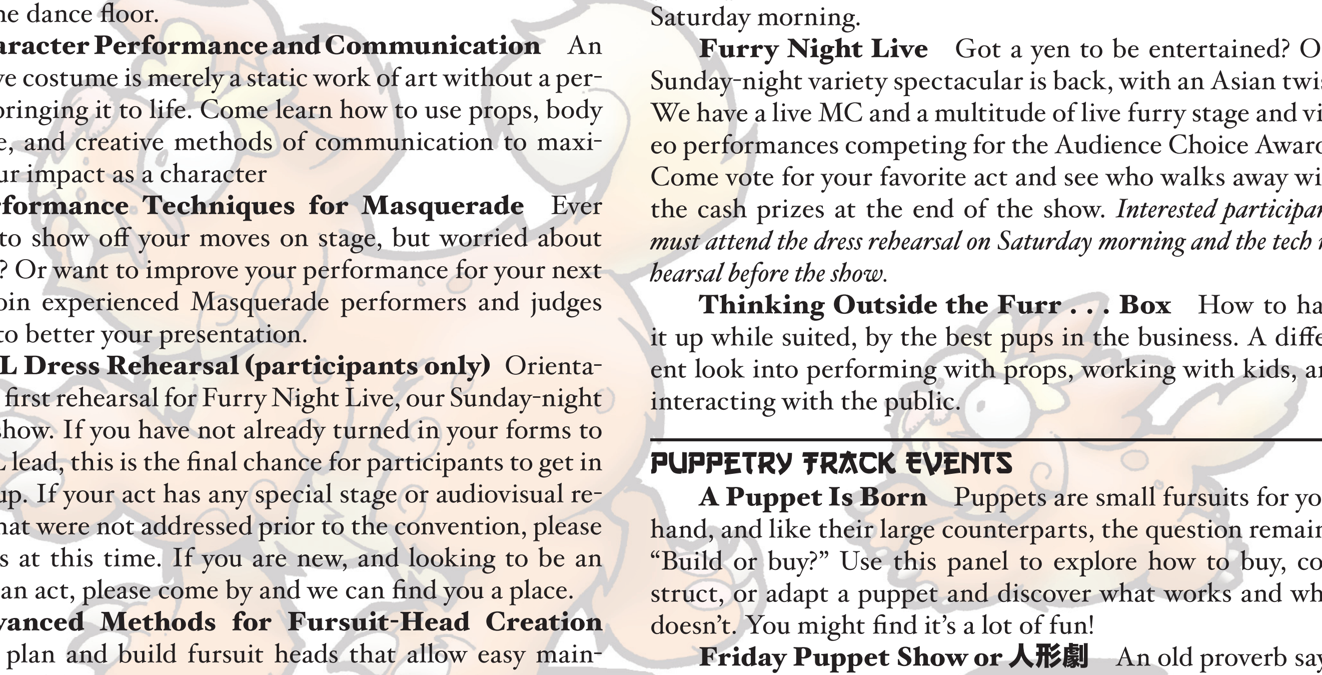
AAE Meeting Every year, the board of directors hold their annual meeting. This meeting is open to the public; anyone interested in the workings of the parent corporation of Further Confusion is welcome to attend.

Hiss and Purr Do you have a compliment or a complaint to give the staff? Air your opinions and give us suggestions for how we can improve next year's convention.

FC09 Job Fair Have you ever wanted to work on a convention? Sure, there's some work involved, but it's also a ton of fun! Come to this panel and volunteer at the very beginning to get involved with Further Confusion 2009.

FURSUIT TRACK

PUPPETRY TRACK



FURSUIT TRACK EVENTS

Fursuit Lounge A private cool-down area for fursuiters and their handlers. Free water and flavored drinks, along with some munchies, will be available. Several fans and good air conditioning will ensure a cool place to sit, take off your head, relax, and recover without the bother of having to trek all the way back to your room. (Please, no cameras or video cameras.)

Intro to Fursuit Head Construction This will be an introduction on how to start a fursuit head using the most common methods, such as foam-core, balaclava, and plastic mesh. Bring a notepad, camera, or sketch pad!

Fursuit Roundtable Join Chairo for the traditional meet-and-greet for fursuiters and meet your fellow suiters in a nice relaxed environment.

Fursuit Dancing How to get it down! From basic dance to some killer grooves, come on down with Oz Kangaroo to the dance floor.

Character Performance and Communication An expensive costume is merely a static work of art without a performer bringing it to life. Come learn how to use props, body language, and creative methods of communication to maximize your impact as a character

Performance Techniques for Masquerade Ever wanted to show off your moves on stage, but worried about freezing? Or want to improve your performance for your next show? Join experienced Masquerade performers and judges for tips to better your presentation.

FNL Dress Rehearsal (participants only) Orientation and first rehearsal for Furry Night Live, our Sunday-night variety show. If you have not already turned in your forms to the FNL lead, this is the final chance for participants to get in the lineup. If your act has any special stage or audiovisual requests that were not addressed prior to the convention, please notify us at this time. If you are new, and looking to be an extra in an act, please come by and we can find you a place.

Advanced Methods for Fursuit-Head Creation How to plan and build fursuit heads that allow easy maintenance and how to integrate animatronics in them. From general improvements (removeable fur covers, moveable jaw, adjustable expressions) to mechanical and electronic enhancements (lights, servos, and microcontroller).

Fursuit Parade It's a huge line of people dressed up in great-looking costumes! What more could you ask for? No event at Further Confusion is quite the spectacle that our annual Fursuit Parade is. An exciting, colorful array of meticulous craftsmanship combined with an air of pride and playfulness, this is truly an event not to be missed.

Masquerade Rehearsal (participants only) Rehearsal for the Masquerade. Registration in advance is mandatory; please stop by the events office between 10 AM and 4 PM on Saturday if you are interested in participating in the Masquerade.

Masquerade Have a fursuit? Show it off here! Want to see what everyone's been making over the past year? Come see what they have done! Fursuit presentation and judging.

Japanese Costume for Fursuiters Have you wanted clothes for your 'suit, but could never figure out how to fit them? Try Japanese clothes. Traditional Japanese clothes were designed not so much to fit the body as to hang off it. The pattern pieces are nothing but rectangles. With a few resources and an industrial-strength can of "wing-it", you can scale and make Japanese patterns that are just right for your 'suit.

Critterlympics VII Join the fun as the Critterlympics return for the seventh spectacular year! Fursuited athletes from all over will battle to decide who is the best of the furry best.

FNL Tech Rehearsal (participants only) This pre-show rehearsal for Furry Night Live is mandatory: acts *must* appear at this rehearsal or they will be stricken from the roster. We will be doing a complete show run-through. Interested participants who have not otherwise turned in their participation forms should first attend the dress rehearsal on Saturday morning.

Furry Night Live Got a yen to be entertained? Our Sunday-night variety spectacular is back, with an Asian twist. We have a live MC and a multitude of live furry stage and video performances competing for the Audience Choice Awards. Come vote for your favorite act and see who walks away with the cash prizes at the end of the show. *Interested participants must attend the dress rehearsal on Saturday morning and the tech rehearsal before the show.*

Thinking Outside the Furr . . . Box How to ham it up while suited, by the best pups in the business. A different look into performing with props, working with kids, and interacting with the public.

PUPPETRY TRACK EVENTS

A Puppet Is Born Puppets are small fursuits for your hand, and like their large counterparts, the question remains, "Build or buy?" Use this panel to explore how to buy, construct, or adapt a puppet and discover what works and what doesn't. You might find it's a lot of fun!

Friday Puppet Show or 人形劇 An old proverb says, "He who provides mirth and merriment must be silly indeed." Come see this proverb proved true with puppet-based songs, sketches, and improvisations.

Tips, Tricks, & Traps in Puppet Performance You have a puppet and want to use it. The question is, how? We'll show you how to get a handle on creating enjoyable puppet performances. Topics include scripting, staging, and lighting.

You Will Witness a Puppet Play Soon The usual zaniness continues with your help, because this show's for you! Audience participation is expected in this show of puppet madness, whether you like to perform, answer questions in our puppet-driven game shows, or just enjoy the hilarity of those crazy furry puppeteers.

Puppet Discussion Roundtable A general opentable discussion of all things puppets. The floor is wide open for anything and everything puppetry here. So if you need information, help, or just want to shoot the breeze about puppets, this is your place.

SOCIAL TRACK

SOCIAL TRACK EVENTS

Thursday-Night Dance Come join us for a celebration of dance and music. Reconnect with old friends while making some new ones.

Meet the Guests Who are these guests of honor? And what makes them so honorable, anyway? This panel answers those questions and others you might have about this year's honorees.

Special Musical Performance: Alexander James Adams Alexander James Adams is an American singer, musician, and songwriter in the Celtic and world music genres. Adams replaced Heather Alexander in her band Uffington Horse and is named her "heir" on Heather Alexander's album *Everafter*. Adams is also referred to as her "heir" by his and Heather Alexander's business manager, Kore Bommeli.

Improv Workshop Show up ready to play! This annual improv workshop event lets you be the next *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* star.

Flowology Toys Workshop Workshop focusing on getting in touch with the body again, with the aid of a few tools—one being poi! Come learn, play, and explore a fun, and challenging, way to become in tune with your body through the art of poi, hoop, and fire dancing. We will cover some of the basic moves, along with the positive body mindset . . . and a little bit of spice with fire saftey tips on top of that. We will provide sock poi for you to use, but if you bring your own, more power to you! This workshop is open to all levels. Come share your own knowledge as well!

Friday-Night Dance From disco to new wave to rock, and alternative and punk and pop, you like it all. We will play only the best from today and yesterday, so you can dance the night away. The first hour of the night will be fursuit-friendly, and fursuits are encouraged for the entire night.

Stand-Up Comedy Show A night of stand-up comedy.

Desserts to Die For Come, enjoy our traditional dessert social.

Coffee, Tea, and Memes Back by popular demand! Come see the panelists hold forth on nearly any subject under the sun, including topics suggested by the audience. Listen to anecdotes, discussion, and debate, and put in your two cents' worth—but keep it short, because a new topic will be up in just a few minutes! Modest refreshments will be provided.

Saturday-Night Dance Come dance the night away to the finest furry DJs, playing the best in electronic dance music. It's not just a dance, but a full multimedia extravaganza featuring music, video, art, and performance. Be sure not to miss it. The first hour of the night will be fursuit-friendly, and fursuits are encouraged for the entire night.

Quite Furry Panelists field obscure animal-themed questions to the best of their abilities and sometimes beyond.

DJ Workshop 101 For those who have an interest in being DJs, but don't know where to begin. Come let us show you the fine art of using DJ equipment, such as vinyl turntables, CD turntables, mixers, and laptops. As well, we'll tell you everything you need to know to get started setting up your own system to practice on at home and getting out and playing in front of an audience.

Sunday-Night Dance A dance for those who like their music a little darker and a little harder, with DJs bringing you the best in hard beats that will shake your body. Come on out and hear what we have in mind for you. The first hour of the night will be fursuit-friendly, and fursuits are encouraged for the entire night.

Tentaclecraft From the depths of Flagstaff, Arizona and the pages of H.P. Lovecraft comes . . . Tentaclecraft. With a sound ranging from folk to electronica, they are sure to keep your feet moving.

Dead Dog Dance Once again, we say farewell to another year at Further Confusion. Come join us for one last dance and another chance to say goodbye to all your many new friends.

SPIRITUALITY TRACK

SPIRITUALITY TRACK EVENTS

Totems A revival of last year's animal totems panel. This panel is a description of basic shamanistic usage of animal totems in personal spirituality, as well as a place for discussion of each participant's particular totem and what it means to them.

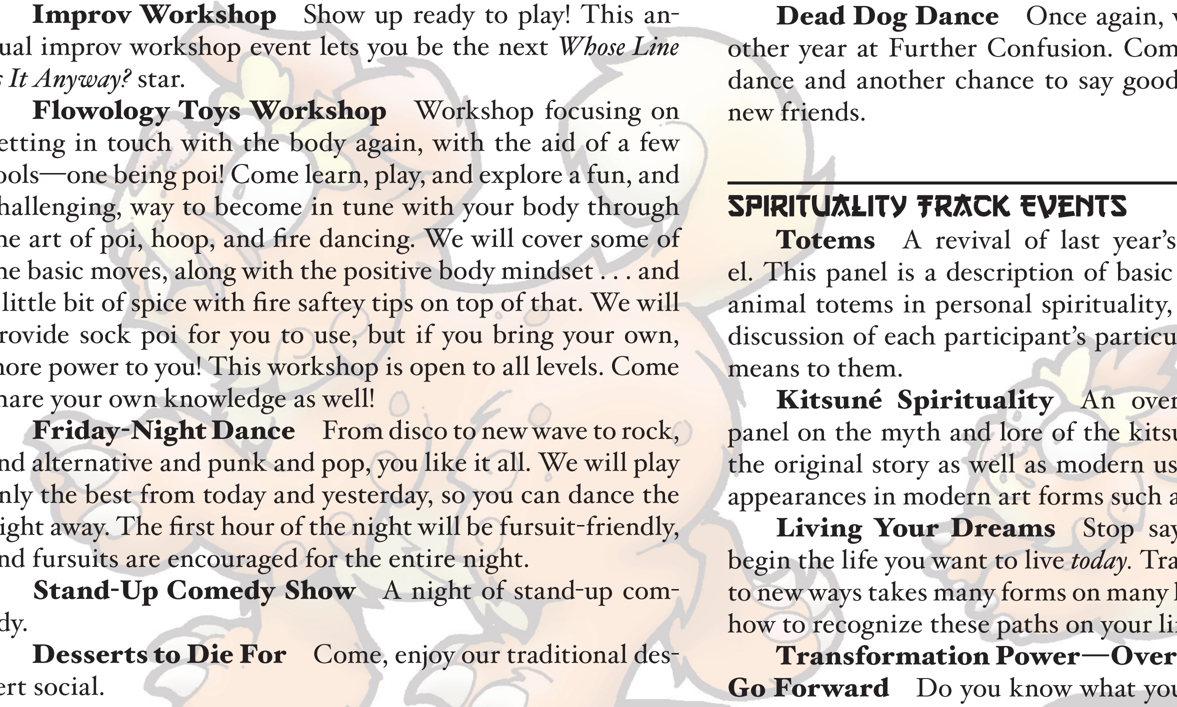
Kitsuné Spirituality An overview and discussion panel on the myth and lore of the kitsuné. This will include the original story as well as modern usages, resonances, and appearances in modern art forms such as animé and manga.

Living Your Dreams Stop saying "tomorrow" and begin the life you want to live *today*. Transformation from old to new ways takes many forms on many levels. A discussion on how to recognize these paths on your life's road.

Transformation Power—Overcoming the Fear to Go Forward Do you know what you want but can't quite seem to get started? Does figuring out what you want elude you? Join the Faerie-Tale Minstrel and his partner in discussing how to remove the paralysis that keeps us from moving on with our lives. . . .

Animals in Deity An overview panel on anthropomorphism, anthropotheism, and animal images in deity and religions. This will span ancient and modern examples with a survey of many cultures. Participants will be encouraged to discuss how being a fur affects their spirituality, if at all. This will focus on god-images rather than totems, to avoid overlap with the totems panel.

Otherkin and Therianthropy A discussion panel about otherkin will explain the phenomenon within the community, discuss personal experience with the subject, and direct participants toward sources of information and resources. This panel will also explore therianthropy, which will include lycanthropy but not focus on it.



SPECIES TRACK EVENTS

Rodents If rodents gnaw at your heartstrings, come to the Rodent Species Panel. This is the Year of the Rat, so this is the place to be!

Foxes Humans and foxes have one significant thing in common—you can find them just about everywhere. Because of that, humanity has featured their pointy-eared, bushy-brushed neighbors prominently in their culture: religion, myth, and fiction. Come discuss the fox's place in the real world, in historical culture, and in the furry fandom.

Avians Eagles and cranes, the nightingale and the phoenix, all play their feathery parts in Asia and around the world. We'll share some stories, talk some biology, and have some feathered fun.

Rabbits We all know about rabbits—or do we? For an animal so common and celebrated in story and myth, it is astounding how little most people know about their basic biology and behavior. Learn about how rabbits are like horses. Find out why they can breed like bunnies. How do people see and interact with them, myth and reality. And what happens when they come out of the hutch and into your home. There will be bunnies to draw and photograph.

Adult Dragon Panel Once again we will host an open forum on the subject of loving dragons in all regards and media. From books, movies, literature, and especially our own fur artists, there will be plenty to talk about, learn, amd share. This is an adults-only panel; you must be at least eighteen years old—no exceptions. Badges will be checked at the door.

Dragons and Scalies Feathered dinosaurs and komodo dragons are just a few of the reptile-like creatures that have inhabited Asia for millennia. We'll talk about these and others from around the world.

Hybrid Furs Manimals! Invertabroads! Lend me your ears! The Hybrid Panel is back, and this year, it's better! Purebreds and hybrids alike are welcome here! We will be discussing origins of hybrid characters, strange species in the real world, and hybrid artwork! Feel free to bring your own art and show it off! Come have a blast and meet some new friends!

Minotaur Dynasty Minotaurs, Tauren, sundry other bovids, and ambassadors from other species are all welcome here! Come and talk about the lore, the history, and the present of this small but steadily growing section of the furry fandom. Debate, discuss, and share your ideas about all things minotaur.

Gryphons Combining the regal traits of both the lord of the beasts and the king of the sky, truly no other creature can match the majestic duality of the gryphon. Through a history spanning over five thousand years the gryphon has been both good and evil, noble and wicked, benign and powerful. Where did such powerful symbolism come from? How has it influenced us today? Where *are* the gryphons today? Come to the Gryphon Panel to find the answers to those questions and more, and bring your own questions to pick the brains of our four gryphon panelists.

Aquatic furs Mermaids and selkies, krakens and Willie, aquatic animals and their mythic counterparts have played a large part in the fantastic for millennia. Come discuss the real and the fantastic and how the two become blurred in the deep blue sea.

Canines The noble wolf, the cunning coyote, the loyal dog—all of these are stereotypes furry fans know, love, and emulate. Come check out what it means to be a canine fan in furry fandom.

Felines *Felines are not humans with OCD.* When a crime suspect starts to wash, he's hiding something. How does society differ? How do they curse? (There may be no concept of bastardy, but calling someone a "dog" will get him acquitted of your murder.) What tools are built by and for hands with retractable claws? (Don't ever mess with a bald tom. He's the town blacksmith.) Courtship rituals: "Get off my fence, I've got finals!" And what do they do about orphans? For matters of protocol and adoption, look to the east.

Mustelids Weasel power! Let's learn and talk about ferrets, otters, stoats, and all the other members of the most successful family of carnivores in the animal kingdom—and they aren't doing so shabby in furdom, either—with two experts in the field. Find out how weasel species act in the wild, the secret lives of domestic ferrets, and why minks are all utter bastards.

WRITING TRACK

WRITING TRACK EVENTS

Fantasy Writing If you've ever contemplated ruling the world, you might try fantasy. If you've considered how to go about taking over, think about writing science fiction. (If you've gone as far as working out a budget, hard SF.) If your primary interest has been what to do to criminals after taking over, your best bet is probably horror. . . .

Animé 101 Big eyes, cute characters, and more plot in one half-hour than Hollywood can manage in a season. Come be introduced to the animé genré and you'll never go back.

Bad Dog Boot Camp: The Fundamental Story Exploring the foundations of the stories that we've told again and again for centuries, and ways to use that understanding to plan out our stories in advance or to keep writing when we're stuck. Good exercise for beginners and important practice for experienced writers.

The Arts of War What are martial arts and how might they develop in a world of anthropomorphic peoples? Using examples from across the real world, both the better-known Eastern disciplines and their nearly forgotten Western counterparts, the panelists examine the requirements and possibilities of these fighting styles and the weapons they use.

Rensaku (Writer's Workshop) Furry novelists unite! Or any writers in general. Unite and discuss what a true story is. Help others with their own stories, or possibly come up with a new one. And, if you're daring enough, come up with a short story that follows the theme of Further Confusion. Travel to the Fur East and return on Sunday to share the story that you've created and have it critiqued.

Bad Dog Boot Camp: Visual Storytelling How to tell stories with images, using space, motion, attributes, and expression to convey your story quickly and effectively. Whether you're drawing a single image, a strip, or a full comic, these techniques will help you draw your viewer into the world you create within the borders of your images. If a picture's worth a thousand words, this panel will teach you how to make the most of them.

"The Eye of Argon" As the Far East is filled with myths and legends, sci-fi–fantasy conventions have their own legend: the "Eye of Argon". Come enjoy the worst fantasy story ever written and fight like a samauri not to break out in laughter.

Kitsuné Lore and Beliefs A look into many of the different things that are believed about the kitsuné as well as readings of folk tales that involve them.

Rensaku Sunday Furry Novelists Reunite! Writers from Saturday and new ones, return to the workshop, whether you are returning to revisit an idea that you came up with or you're coming up with new ones. And have your short stories ready to be reviewed, critiqued, and then voted on for the best. The winner of this mini-competition will be submitted to the convention newsletter for publication.

Manga, Animé, and Games Have you ever noticed that when there's a series of comic books, films, and video games from the same franchise, the ones that come out of Japan are generally pretty good, while the ones from the United States pretty much stink on ice? Is there some secret formula that American producers just haven't figured out? Join our panelists as they discuss what it takes to make a successful franchise both here and abroad.

Tail Wags & Ear Twitches How to use natural animal behaviors in your writing to truly make your characters furry!

Bad Dog Boot Camp: Narrative Techniques and Leading Your Reader Where the Fundamental Story Panel focused on the big picture, now we look at the components that form the journey a reader experiences when reading your story. How to use suspense and surprise, how to dig yourself out of a mystery even you can't solve, and above all: how to keep your reader interested and entertained.

Bad Dog Boot Camp: Meet The Editors (They Don't Bite) Shoot the breeze with the editors of Bad Dog Books, Alex Vance (founder, editor-in-chief and author of *Heathen City*), Ben Goodridge (editor of *Roar* and author of *White Crusade*), Cinnamon DeWolf (editor of *Fang* and prolific erotic fiction writer), and guest panelists from Sofawolf Press and FurPlanet. Learn about the editing and publishing process of Bad Dog Books and the publishing industry in general. Pitch your questions and get the inside scoop!

ART TRACK

ART TRACK EVENTS

Creator's Lounge The Creator's Lounge is a quiet place to draw and socialize, open to any artistic ability from amateur to professional, with art supplies and paper for the taking. Drop off a sketchbook for others to draw in—but be aware that you leave it at your own risk, so don't forget to put your name on it. Trades and free commissions are encouraged, but art may not be sold; the place for that is the Dealer's Room. Come, sit, draw, and enjoy yourself!

Painting Feathers & Fur Many of the animals found in anthropomorphic artwork are covered in either fur or feathers, which pose a unique challenge to the artist. Guest of Honor Moira Hahn will discuss her approaches to these problems, with examples from recent work.

Horses—By Chris Sawyer Horses can be a daunting subject to draw. Join Chris Sawyer as he puts his hooves into this challenging area of furry art.

Iron Artist Chairman Seurat once again calls for challengers to take on the Iron Artists to determine who are the best furry artists using a new surprise media.

How to Draw Giant Robots Few things are as common in modern animé as giant robots. This panel will provide the basics of drawing them, such as construction and basic aesthetics, as well as some pointers specifically geared toward drawing giant robotic animals.

Advanced Colored Pencils Frustrated with your lack of knowledge or skill with colored pencils? Come on by for an hour of instruction. New perspectives can help you get past your art blocks.

Anthro Anatomy Frustrated with those legs? Can't get that arm just right? Then come on in and let Chris Sawyer give you tips and show you how he does it in the Anthro Anatomy panel.

ArtSpots Jam! The ArtSpots Jam is a place to meet, greet, draw with and collaborate with those artists you know from online. Exchange ideas for future projects and possible, including a panel to discuss the future of anthropomorphic art in the "real" world.

Working With Color Pencil Only recently has the medium of color pencil begun to receive the recognition it justly deserves. If you already work in it, or would like to add it to your repertoire, this demonstration will help you get up to speed. Your host will cover both the basics and a few tricks you might not have seen elsewhere.

Marker Skills Jealous of that big-name artist? Perhaps we can help jump-start your skill in this challenging medium.

Creator's Lounge Art Raffle While the Creator's Lounge is open, everyone is welcome to donate drawn art to a raffle. Anyone who donates gets a raffle ticket. If the art piece has something to do with FC's theme, the donor receives two tickets. Sunday night the art will be seperated into piles and will be raffled off. No single person may win multiple times.

SCIENCE & TECH. TRACK

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TRACK EVENTS

Asian Animal Overview There are more animals in Asia than just the panda and tiger. This panel will look at all of the strange, interesting, and sometime bizarre mammals that make Asia one of the furriest places in the world! Expect bears, tapirs, marbled cats, and more!

Second Life *Second Life* is home to eight million-plus avatars and is one of the most active communities for furry interaction. Come and hear what's out there for the modern furry in this huge and malleable virtual world!

Wild, Wonderful Wikis Wikis have exploded in content and in numbers over the last few years. There's one for just about everything. Come and see which ones might be of interest to you, how they work, and what you can do with them.

Live Animal Event Leopards, Inc will be bringing a number of large cats for your viewing enjoyment.

Wolf Recovery Throughout history, wolves have been loved, hated, feared, and revered. Now, after a century of seriously dwindling numbers, many people are dedicating their lives to helping these magnificent creatures remain viable in the wild. Come hear from those who have put themselves on a quest to keep wolves more than just collective memories.

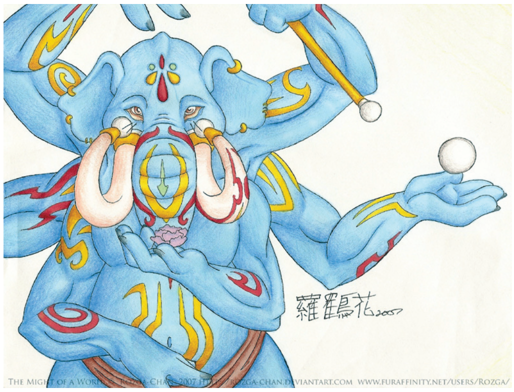
Podcasting Workshop This is the "how-to workshop" for how you might make your own podcast. This will teach you the basics of how to put a podcast together for yourself and what to do once you've got the skills!

Why, Yes . . . I'm a Scientist! Come and see who among the Further Confusion attendees also hold the mastery of science in their hands!

Furry Podcasts There seem to be podcasts popping up for everything these days, and furry fandom is no different. Join podcasters and fans to learn who you can tune into regularly, how the whole deal works and what's coming up!

The Science of Dragons What would it take to give us a real dragon? How would such a thing evolve? This panel will look at the biology, chemistry, and physics that would be involved in bring our image of a dragon to reality. A hard-science look at a fantasy phenomena.

Furry Biotech A discussion on why we are how we are and why current or future science is unlikely to allow people to change into different beings.



The Might of a Word © Rozga-Chan 2007 http://rozga-chan.deviantart.com www.furaffinity.net/users/Rozga/

GAMING TRACK

GAMING TRACK EVENTS

Gaming Room Whether tabletop or electronic gaming is more your speed, indulge your competitive spirit at Further Confusion's Gaming Rooms! We're open 24-hours during the convention for players to relax, meet, and compete.

TNT: Stump the Genius FurryMUCK's Thursday Night Trivia ('N More!) comes to Further Confusion! Join hosts Kenneth and Genevive Fox for Stump the Genius, their home-grown trivia game, wherein the Genius can be anything but and it pays to know when someone's blowing smoke!

***Dragonstorm* Demo** Susan Van Camp's *Dragonstorm* has always been a hit with furry gamers, and now's your chance to get in on the action! Come get a briefing and demo of the game from experienced players, and follow along with a deck of your own, offered at a discounted price as a gift from Black Dragon Press.

***DDR* Competition** Everyone knows furries can groove, right? Here's your chance to prove it! FC Gaming is asking furs to come on down and step to the beat in our annual official *DDR* Tournament! It's high-energy and loads of fun, so bring your best moves!

Sanguine Productions Showcase Come spend some time with the minds behind Sanguine Productions, who bring you the *Ironclaw* and *Jadeclaw* furry role-playing games as well as a number of other creative works.

Furmily Feud It's the fur-iendliest feud ever! John "The Gneech" Robey hosts our version of the famous game how, wherein contestants try to get into the "average" fur's head and come up with the most popular answers from our surveys. Prizes and fame await the winners!

CALYPSTE
2007

Intro to the Gaming Industry Are you a furry looking to break into the video game industry? Then come to this panel, led by industry insider Span_Wolf, and prepare to take that all-important first step into this exciting field!

Fur-l in the Blank Genevive Fox hosts a gameshow that's *so* funny . . . How funny is it? You'll have to come watch to find out! And Genevive isn't the only one back from last year's show—Chip Unicorn and Dusty Rhoades join Con Co-Chair Melchar, *The Class Menagerie* and *i.s.o.* cartoonist Vince Suzukawa, and furry pin-up artist Michele Light for another round of *Match Game*-style fun! You'll laugh your ______ off!

***Super Smash Brothers* Tourney** One of FC Gaming's most popular events, the annual official *Super Smash Brothers: Melee* tournament returns for fans of cute, cartoony characters kicking, punching, and slamming their way to victory. The competition is always fierce, fast, and fun, so come join the virtual fight, or just cheer on our GameCube gladiators!

Live-Action Chess It's chess like you've never seen it before! A giant mat, two armies of grizzled warriors, and gameplay like Fisher and Kasparov never even imagined! Come play or just watch the spectacle—it's sure to be memorable for all!

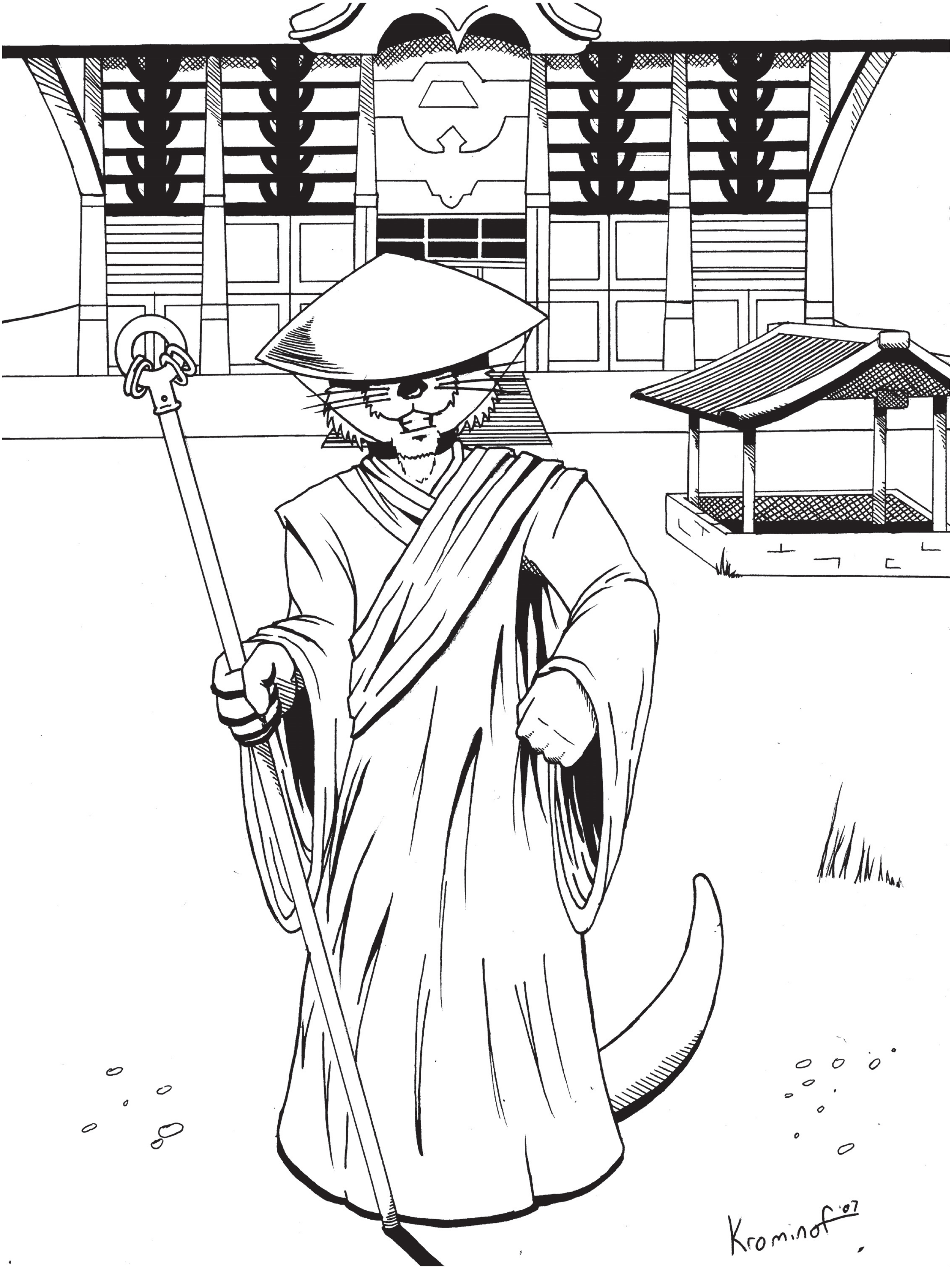
Who Wants to Be a Furrionaire? Sure, you know what year ConFurence started, and how many there were. You know what NIMH stands for. You can recite the names of all nineteen of the *Redwall* books—in order. But do you have what it takes to be a *furrionaire*? Inquisitor Kenneth Fox is your guide on a quest of questions, through the comically simple to the brutally difficult. Use your lifelines, wrack your brain, take your chances . . . but you'd better be sure: "Is that your final answer?"

***Guitar Hero III* Tournament** Furries *rock*! Last year's *Guitar Hero* tournament was packed with shredders, pickers, and aspiring rock gods, and this year, we're bringing you the latest edition in the series. So if you know that 11 is louder than 10, come play and party with us!

FMCL@FC (Cribbage) Tournament One of the oldest traditions of the convention, Genevive Fox's FMCL@FC Tournament has always seen spirited competition, as well as lots of fun and mingling of very different personalities, united by a card game. If you have always been curious about cribbage, this is the best place to find players willing to share the game with you. And if you think you've got skills already, this is the best place to find players willing to let you prove it!

Rock Band Open Night! Why just have karaoke . . . when you can rock in a band? Sign up to play drums, lead, bass, or sing one of the songs in the setlist, and when your song is called, the stage is yours!

Texas Hold-'Em Tournament Shuffle up and deal! Our poker tournament returns for another year as fifty players do battle over flops, turns, and rivers to claim all the chips at the table. Only five will make it to the main event . . . do you have the nerves to hang on that long?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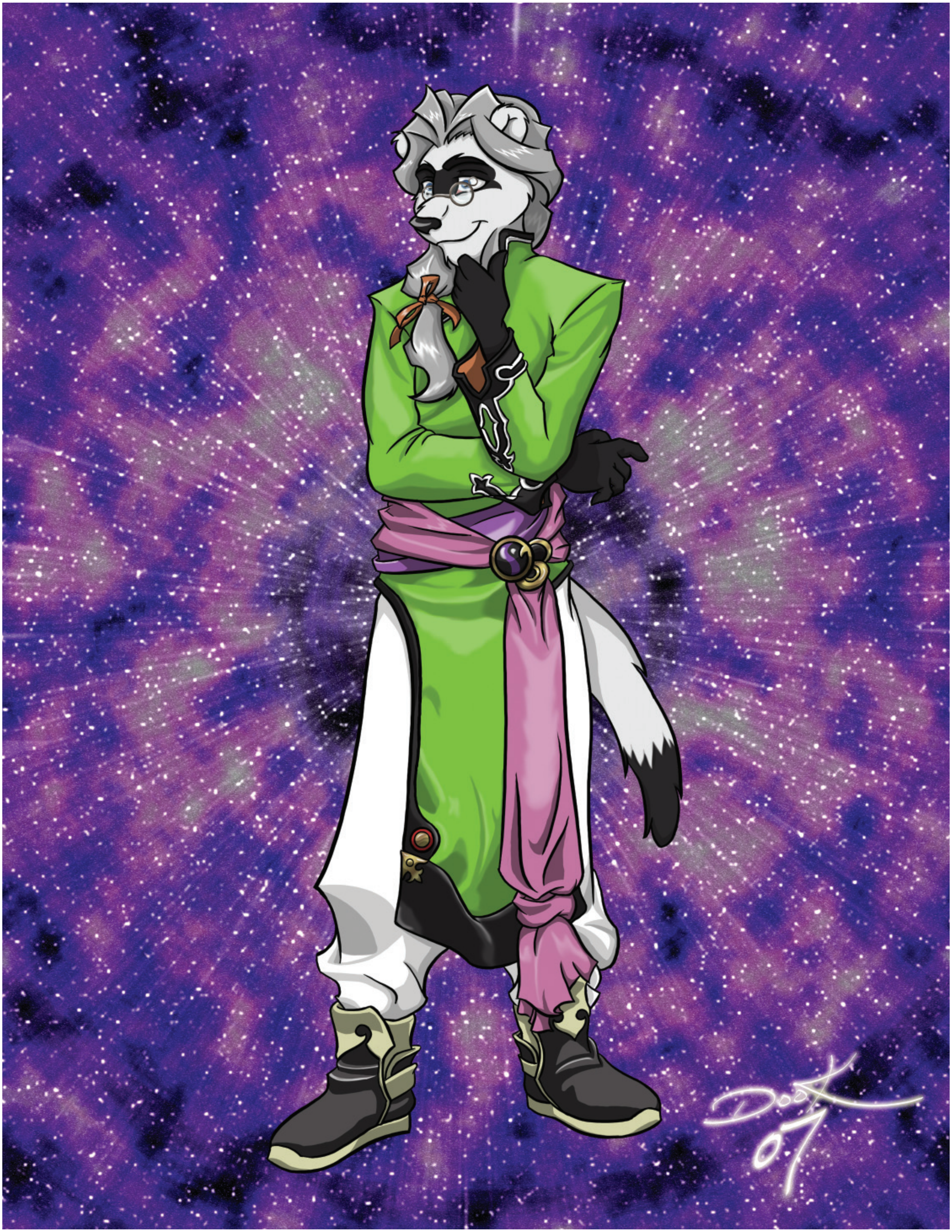
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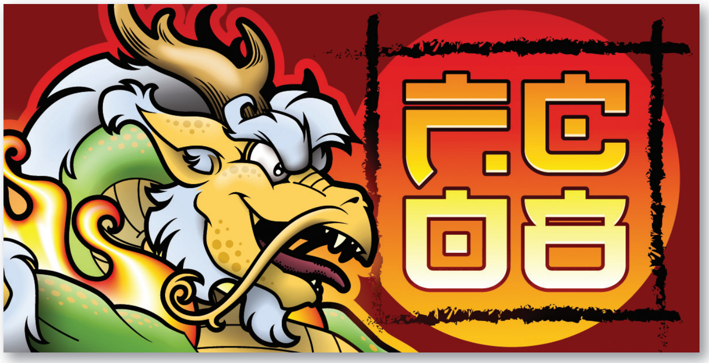

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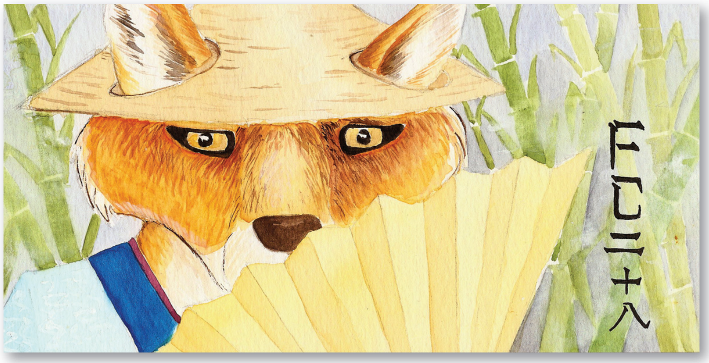

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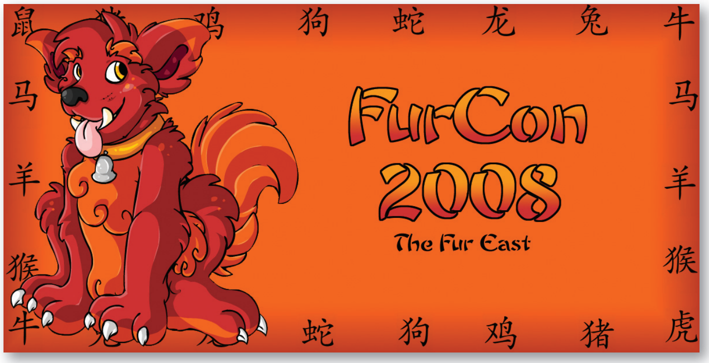
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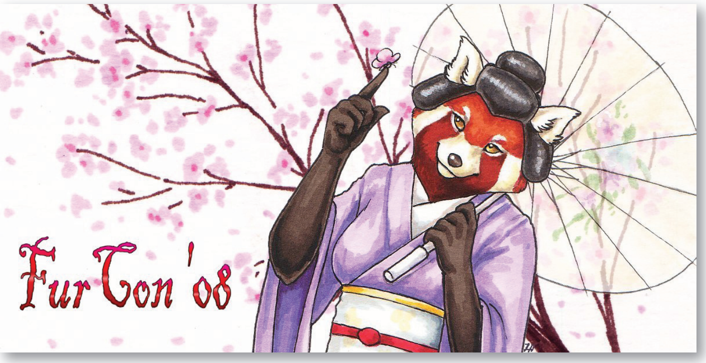

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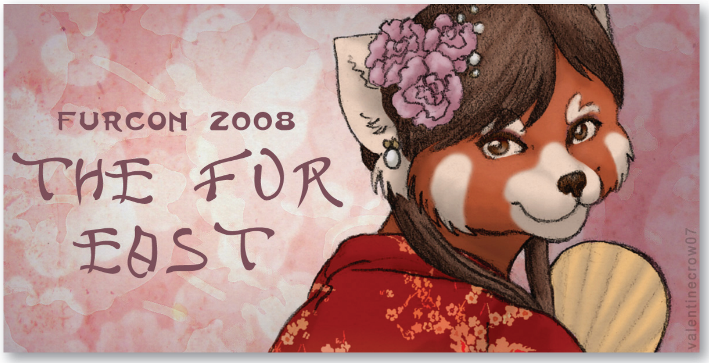
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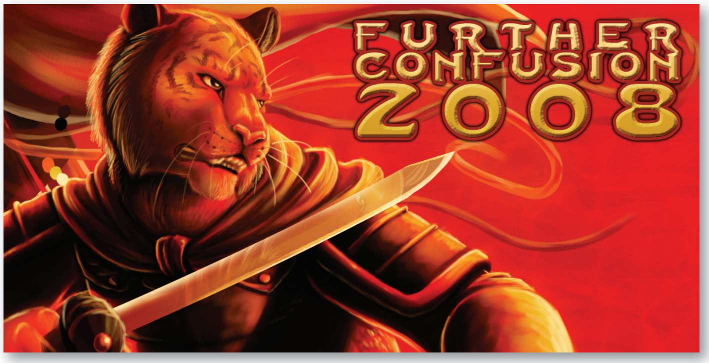
FURTHER
CONFUSION
2008

Zhivago Daemon

Some fandoms let their shows fade away... ...NOT US!

GATHERING of the GARGOYLES

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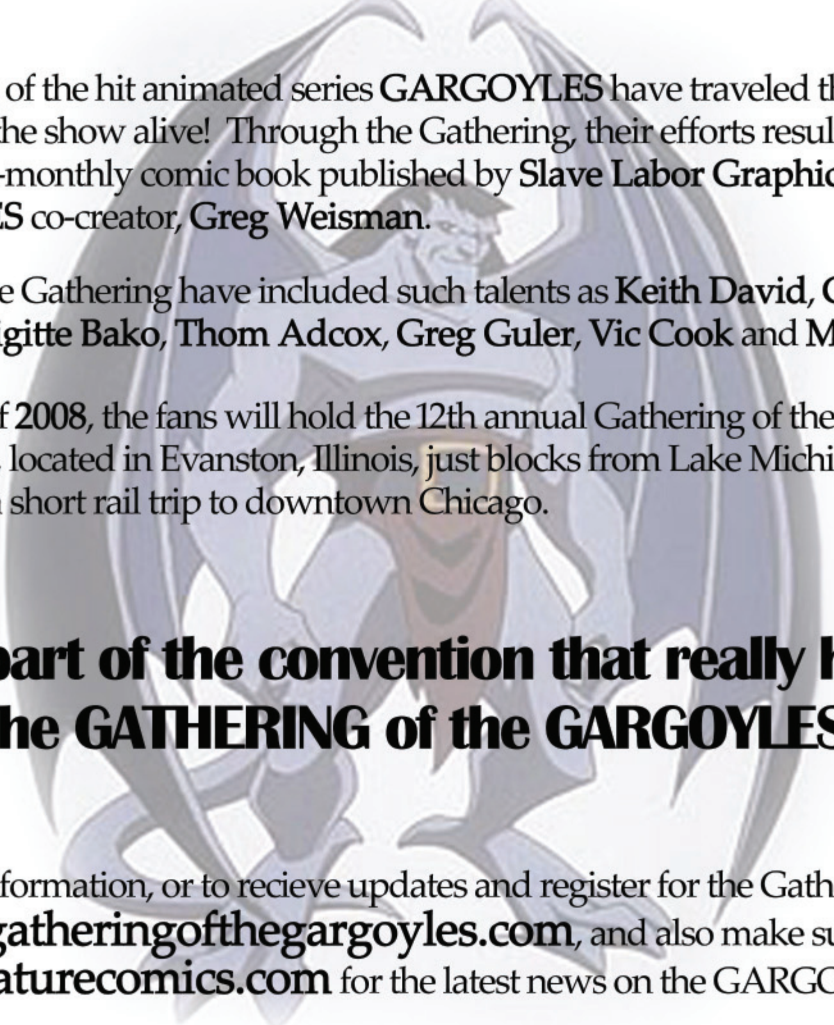

For 11 years, fans of the hit animated series **GARGOYLES** have traveled the country and beyond to keep the show alive! Through the Gathering, their efforts resulted in **two** DVD releases and a bi-monthly comic book published by **Slave Labor Graphics** and written by **GARGOYLES** co-creator, **Greg Weisman**.

Past guests of the Gathering have included such talents as **Keith David**, **Greg Weisman**, **Jeff Bennett**, **Brigitte Bako**, **Thom Adcox**, **Greg Guler**, **Vic Cook** and **Michael Reaves**!

In the summer of **2008**, the fans will hold the 12th annual Gathering of the Gargoyles at the Hotel Orrington, located in Evanston, Illinois, just blocks from Lake Michigan, Northwest University, and a short rail trip to downtown Chicago.

Come be a part of the convention that really hits the road The GATHERING of the GARGOYLES!

For more information, or to recieve updates and register for the Gathering*, go to **www.gatheringofthegargoyles.com**, and also make sure to visit **www.creaturecomics.com** for the latest news on the GARGOYLES comic!

* Buy an adult package (registration, t-shirt, and banquet) before **December 31st, 2007** and save $35 off the regular, combined package!

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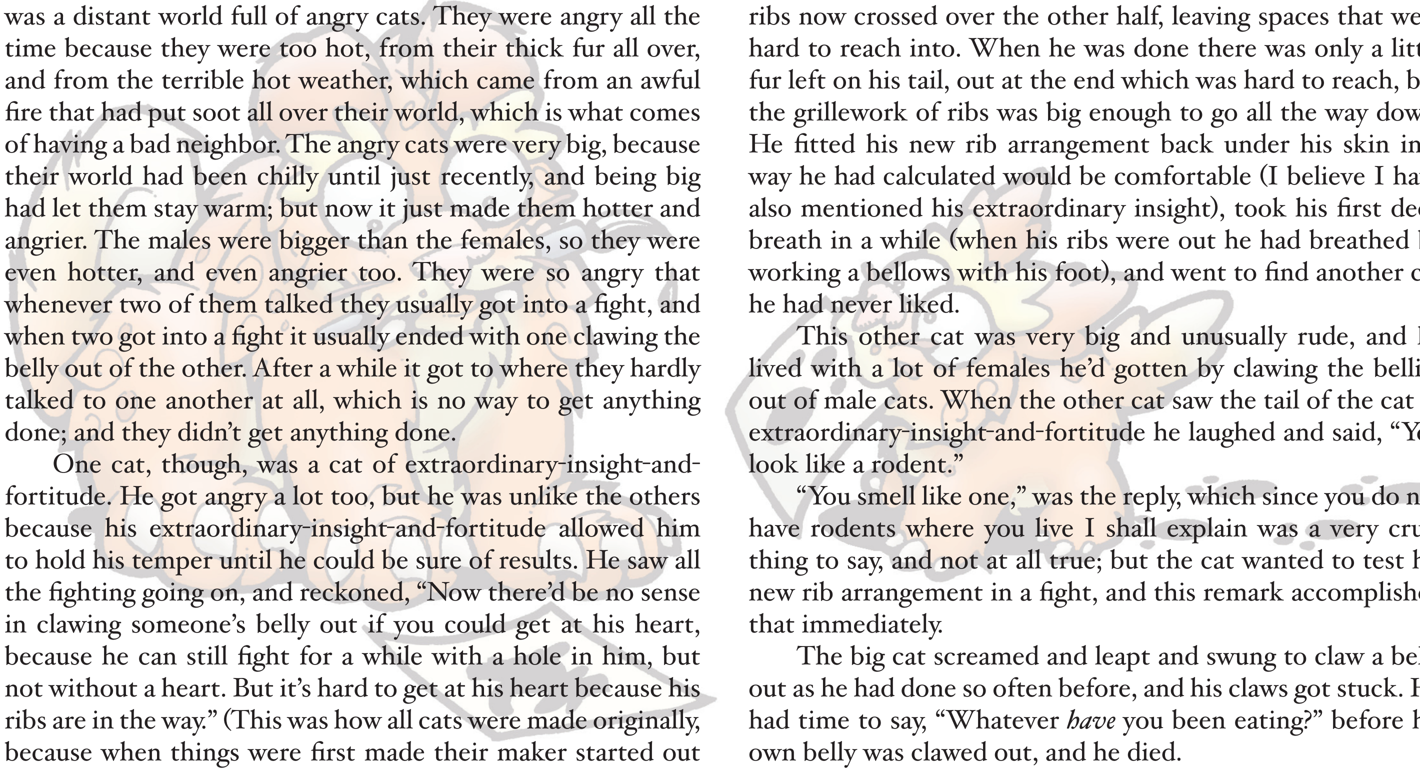
It is a non-profit corporation, founded and run by the show's fans. No copyright infringement is intended.

GRANNY CORBEN'S AS-FAR-AS-YOU-KNOW STORIES

THE CAT WHO MADE PLANS

MATTHEW JOSEPH HARRINGTON



Long ago, O Best Beloved, when our ancestors still dragged their knuckles on the ground and believed political Parties were intended for the benefit of the voters, there was a distant world full of angry cats. They were angry all the time because they were too hot, from their thick fur all over, and from the terrible hot weather, which came from an awful fire that had put soot all over their world, which is what comes of having a bad neighbor. The angry cats were very big, because their world had been chilly until just recently, and being big had let them stay warm; but now it just made them hotter and angrier. The males were bigger than the females, so they were even hotter, and even angrier too. They were so angry that whenever two of them talked they usually got into a fight, and when two got into a fight it usually ended with one clawing the belly out of the other. After a while it got to where they hardly talked to one another at all, which is no way to get anything done; and they didn't get anything done.

One cat, though, was a cat of extraordinary-insight-and-fortitude. He got angry a lot too, but he was unlike the others because his extraordinary-insight-and-fortitude allowed him to hold his temper until he could be sure of results. He saw all the fighting going on, and reckoned, "Now there'd be no sense in clawing someone's belly out if you could get at his heart, because he can still fight for a while with a hole in him, but not without a heart. But it's hard to get at his heart because his ribs are in the way." (This was how all cats were made originally, because when things were first made their maker started out with fish, and when things were made to live on land the gills were used for ribs. Their maker was a Professional, and hated to change a design.) "So," the cat reasoned, "if my ribs went all the way down, it would be much harder to claw my belly out, and by and by people would see the sense of listening to what I had to say."

So saying, the cat took his ribs out from under his skin (I am sure I mentioned his extraordinary fortitude), spread them out, and examined them, and reckoned that if they were spread more widely when replaced they would just let anyone reach in and grab out whatever they pleased. His tail swung back and forth with annoyance, and he watched it for a little while. Then he began to comb his tail.

Like all his folk, he had a fluffy and luxuriant tail, which was one of the reasons he was so hot so much of the time. He combed fur off his tail, and as he combed it off he spun it into tough strands, and as he collected strands he used them to tie his ribs into a grillework. The spaces in the grille were broader than the original spaces between his ribs had been, but half the ribs now crossed over the other half, leaving spaces that were hard to reach into. When he was done there was only a little fur left on his tail, out at the end which was hard to reach, but the grillework of ribs was big enough to go all the way down. He fitted his new rib arrangement back under his skin in a way he had calculated would be comfortable (I believe I have also mentioned his extraordinary insight), took his first deep breath in a while (when his ribs were out he had breathed by working a bellows with his foot), and went to find another cat he had never liked.

This other cat was very big and unusually rude, and he lived with a lot of females he'd gotten by clawing the bellies out of male cats. When the other cat saw the tail of the cat of extraordinary-insight-and-fortitude he laughed and said, "You look like a rodent."

"You smell like one," was the reply, which since you do not have rodents where you live I shall explain was a very cruel thing to say, and not at all true; but the cat wanted to test his new rib arrangement in a fight, and this remark accomplished that immediately.

The big cat screamed and leapt and swung to claw a belly out as he had done so often before, and his claws got stuck. He had time to say, "Whatever *have* you been eating?" before his own belly was clawed out, and he died.

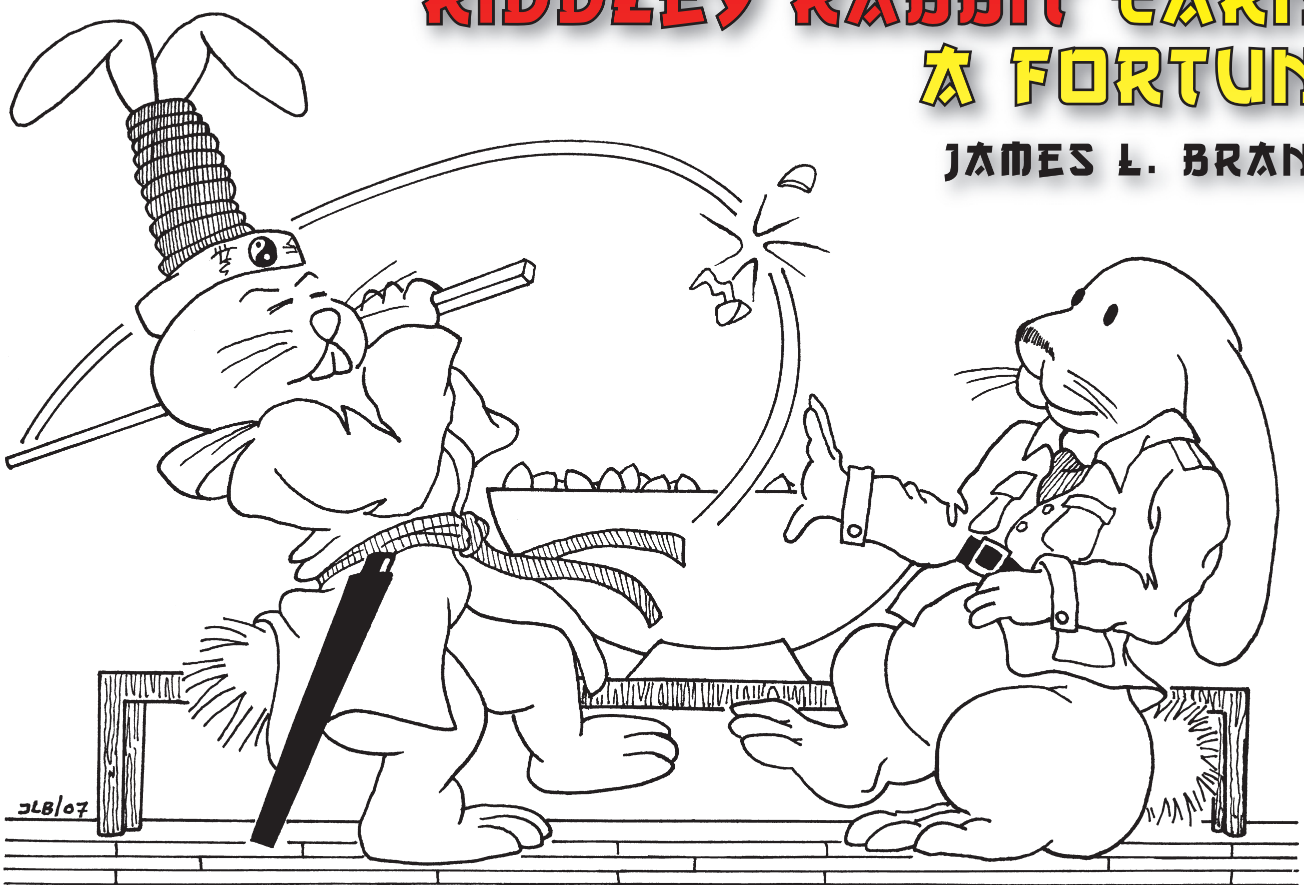
The cat of extraordinary-insight-and-fortitude went into the home of his late enemy and told the females there, "I am the new master here, and my sons will all bear my name, which is Kzin." (His papa had had allergies and sneezed a lot.) "If they want any other name they'll have to do something at least half as clever as I have. Has anyone anything to say?"

It was a couple of weeks later, after all the females, who didn't get along with each other either, had said everything they had to say (twice, so nobody would forget), that the cat had a moment to himself. He immediately combed the fur off his ears and braided it into drawstrings.

And ever since then, the sons of Kzin have had ribs that go all the way down, and no fur on their ears or tails (except at the tip where it's hard to reach), and ears they can close up when it seems advisable.

RIDDLEY RABBIT EARNS A FORTUNE

JAMES L. BRANDT



Chinese tea culture involves not only the ingredients and brewing of tea, it also concerns the many occasions at which tea is consumed in China. Chinese families can be rather extended, literally hundreds of members, so getting together, drinking tea and socializing is an important activity during family gatherings.

Especially if one is a rabbit. Those hundreds of relatives could be all over the globe.

Our intrepid explorer, the off-white, off-the-cuff lop rabbit Riddley was on an adventure to the Far East. His presence was requested at a special tea ceremony. Riddley was visiting his distant relative, the White Ninja ,Kahzy. He was a martial arts expert rabbit. He wore a white kimono with a bright red sash and a ceremonial headband, his ears done up in a top knot, so tall that he resembled the Trix rabbit.

The White Ninja met Riddley at the door of his humble abode, a bunny hutch made largely of bamboo. After the traditional Chinese rabbit greeting of bowing and nuzzling, it was Riddley who spoke first.

“Kahzy is an unusual name,” Riddley pointed out. “How did you end up with it?”

“I am named after honorable ancestor,” ,Kahzy informed him.

“And,” Riddley wondered, “he had a punctuation problem?”

“Oh, honorable ancestor used to train with Siamese cat,” ,Kahzy told him proudly. “So brave! They play fetch. He take off, then kitty cat catch and bring him back.”

“No wonder you pronounce the name comma-ka-zee!” Riddley marveled, wide-eyed and a little more pale after that bit of information.

“Today, I train with Usagi Yojimbo!” ,Kahzy declared. “Not easy, but then again, not so many teeth involved, you know?”

“I can imagine,” Riddley groaned. “Teeth are not good.”

Riddley was ushered inside to the room where the tea ceremony would take place. On a low table in the center of the room was a large, golden bowl brimming with what at first appeared to be small, folded wontons. He asked the White Ninja what was up.

“That is Bowl of Eternal Wisdom,” ,Kahzy said with great reverence. “Many have tried to discover its mysteries, but few can understand.”

“Those are fortune cookies!” Riddley pointed out. “What, do they predict the future or something?”

“Very true, Number One Bun,” ,Kahzy said with certainty as he nodded. “Only most sincere relative will be rewarded with the Key to the Future.”

“What’s that?” Riddley requested.

“Prediction will come only from Green Fortune,” ,Kahzy explained. “Most fortune cookies contain plain white paper.”

“I never get tired of cookies,” Riddley admitted, shaking his head.

“Of all honorable relatives,” ,Kahzy declared, “we say you are most sincere.”

“How’s that?” Riddley wondered, wrinkling his nose and fanning his whiskers.

“You from United States,” Kahzy pointed out. “Chinese Fortune Cookie is not even Chinese. It originated in California. We have needed real American rabbit to choose Key to the Future, most sincere!”

“How about that,” Riddley marveled. “All this at a time when just about everything sold in American stores is made in China!”

“American humans need be more sincere,” ,Kahzy said solemnly, closing his eyes and nodding his head. He pressed the palms of his hands together as well.

“Tell me about it!” Riddley exclaimed, his long lop ears perking up a bit.

“Humans sometimes such strange people,” ,Kahzy observed. “When they grow up, somewhere along the line, milk and cookies become latte and biscotti.”

The White Ninja bade Riddley to select a cookie and hand it to him.

“We do not spoil cookie by shattering,” ,Kahzy told him. “We slice clean in half with almighty Samurai Chopstick!”

He slid a long, tapered wooden shaft from a holster attached to his belt sash, and twirling it around first to get just the right grip on it, swung the sword shaped rod in a wide arc about his head, while he tossed the cookie into the air with his free hand.

“Hah-sah!” ,Kahzy shouted.

With a snap, the cookie broke cleanly in two, the halves falling upon the table while a white message from within it drifted through the air. Riddley let it fall into his paws and examined it carefully.

“Swing and a Miss,” it read. “Strike One.”

“I don’t think this is the Key to the Future,” he observed, holding the note aloft by one corner, as if it were a dead fish. “For one thing, it’s not green.”

“Many have tried where none have succeeded,” his Chinese cousin assured him. “We have faith in you. Please to select another.”

Riddley chose cookie after cookie, chopped in two immediately thereafter by ,Kahzy, and none of the messages inside were on green paper. Most of the fortunes Riddley read were rather lame.

“Looking for something?”

“Inspected by No.2.”

“The sun rises only in the Far East.”

“Fortune Unavailable. (Possibly your server has crashed.)”

“You will die one day.”

“Watch out behind you!”

“Disregard the previous fortune.”

“This fortune intentionally left blank.”

“Yiff if you can read this!”

“We are getting nowhere,” said the lop rabbit, growing somewhat exasperated.

“We are not nowhere yet,” the White Ninja pointed out. “A chance left remains!”

There, in the middle of an otherwise empty bowl, was one last fortune cookie.

“Go for it!” Riddley concluded.

“Hah-sah!” ,Kahzy called out, flipping the cookie into the air and dicing it neatly in half with the Samurai Chopstick.

A green piece of paper fluttered down to land on the table.

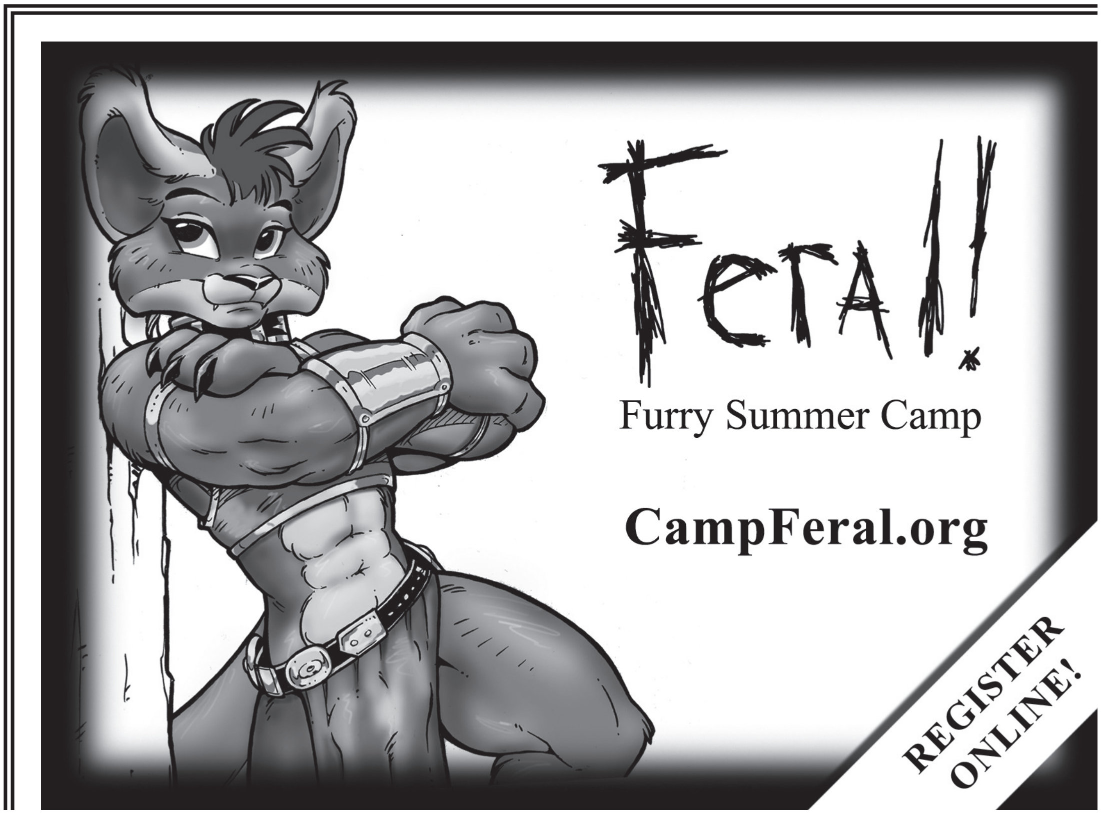
“The prophecy is true!” ,Kahzy declared, sheathing his chopstick. “You *are* the one most sincere. Read for me the words of our Key to the Future, Number One Bun!”

Riddley picked up the piece of paper, his nose and whiskers wiggling in anticipation.

“You will enjoy plenty of cookies for lunch,” he read aloud.

The two rabbits looked at the heap of cracked open fortune cookies, scattered all about on the table top.

“I go make us hot pot green tea,” ,Kahzy announced, turning to leave the room and crunching on a cookie half as he walked out.



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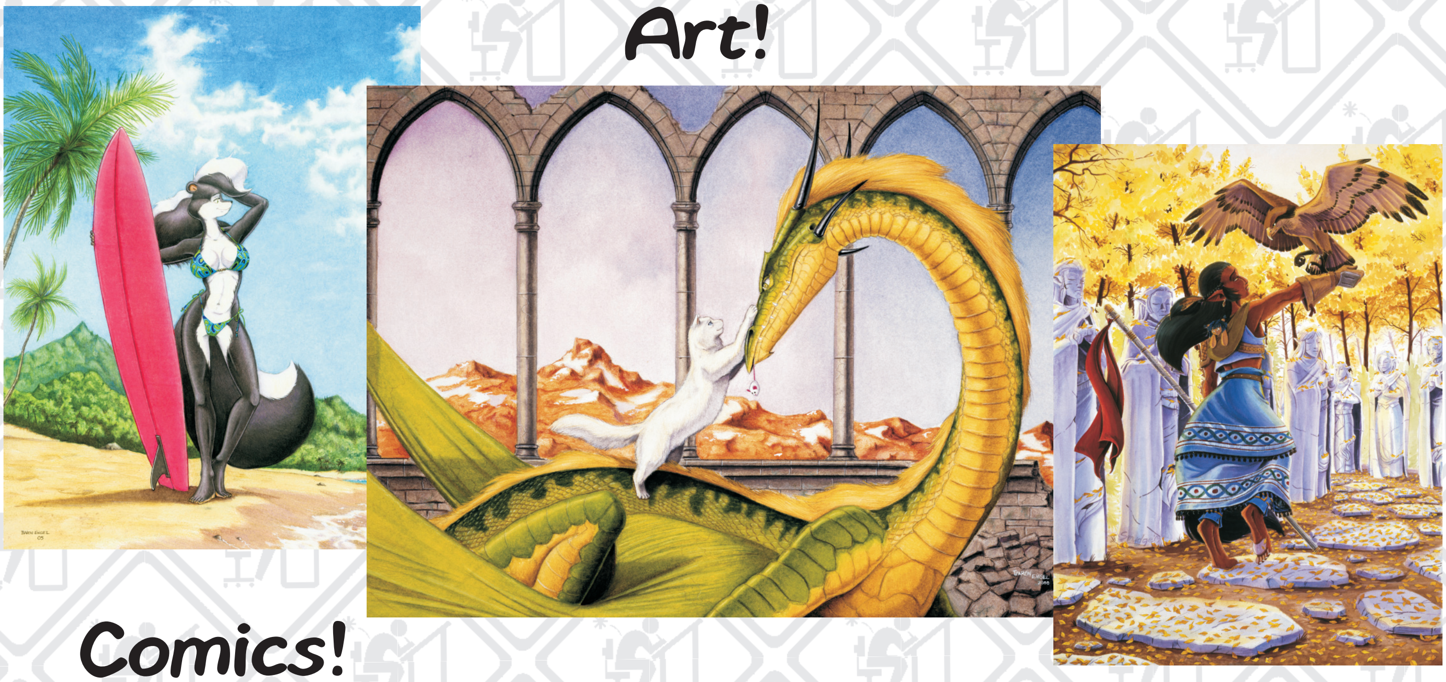

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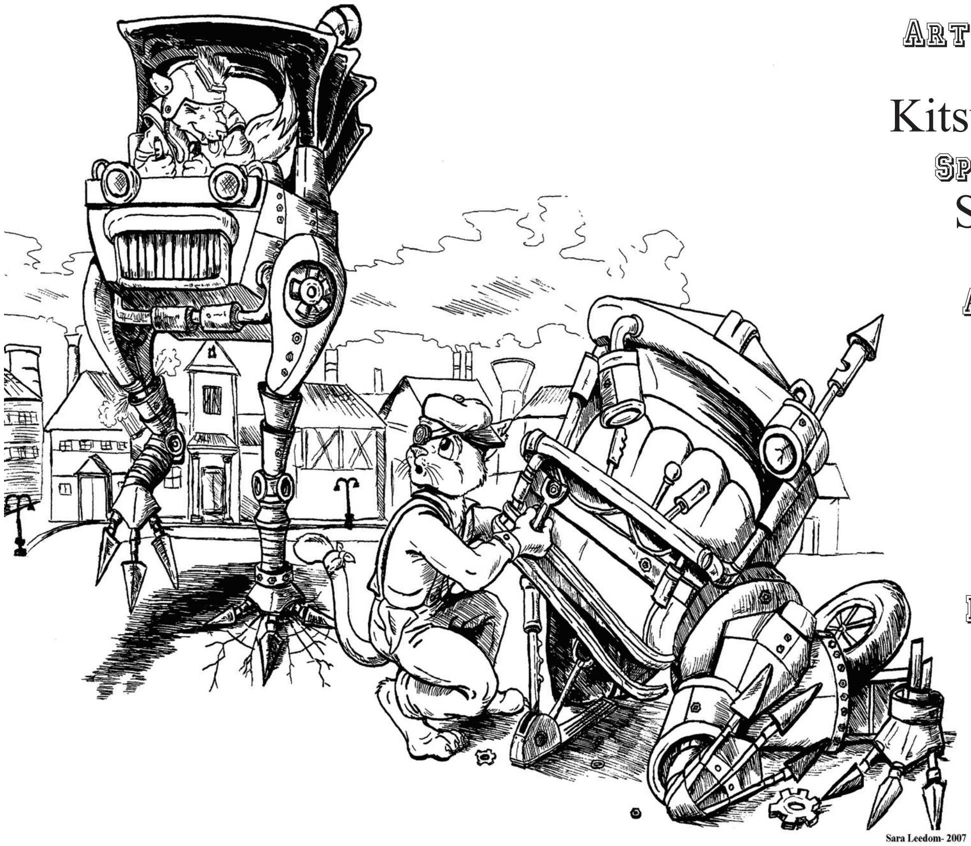

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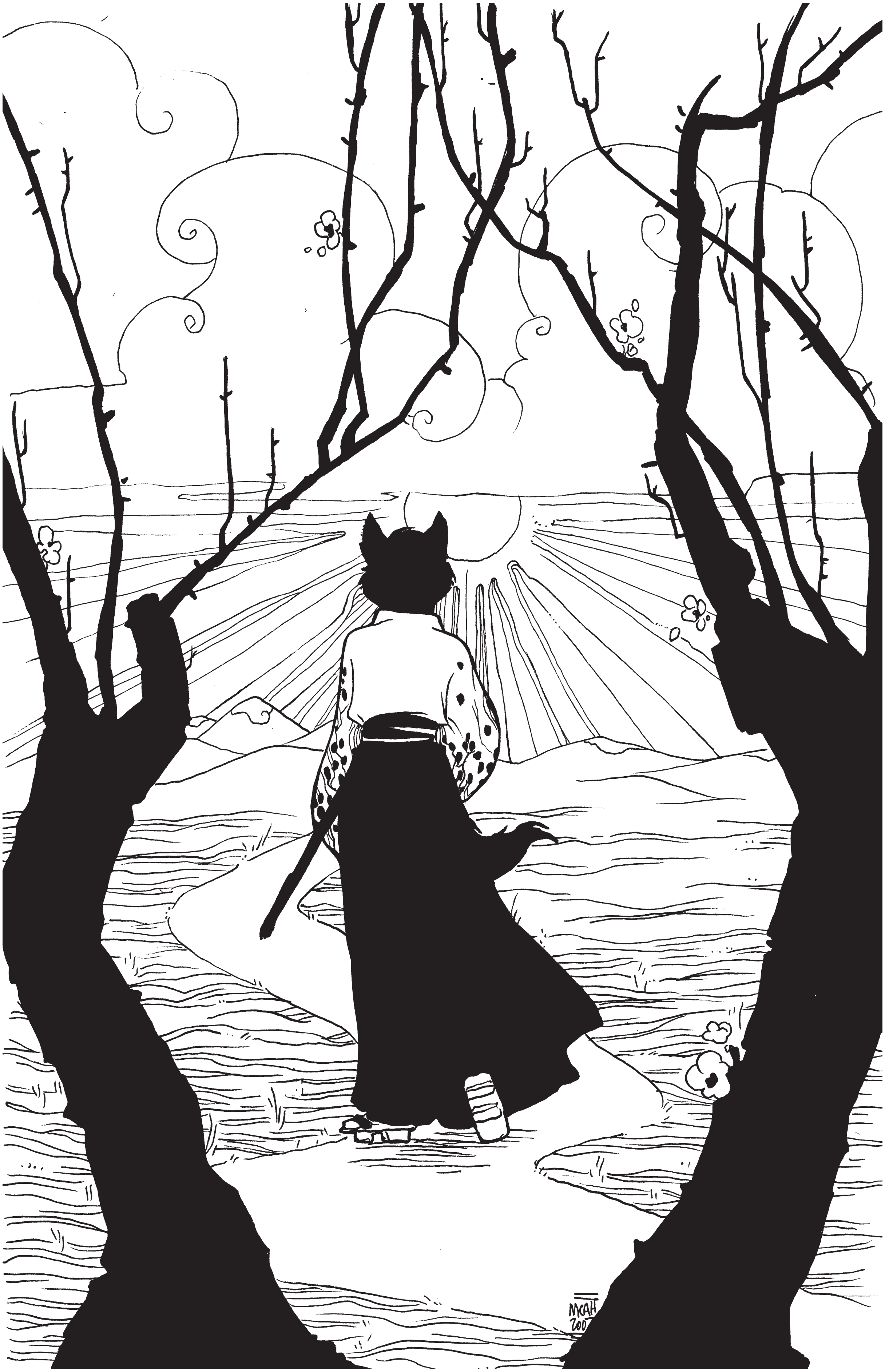


THE NARROW ROAD IN MORNING LIGHT

WRITTEN BY
WATTS MARTIN
ILLUSTRATED BY
M.C.A. HOGARTH

When she entered the inn, framed momentarily in the doorway by the fading sunset, the four patrons—and the innkeeper—looked up.

Normally, few passing by the woman on a road would spare a second glance. She did stand out; wolves were an uncommon race, and she stood tall for a woman. But her form was more lanky than lissome, and both her robe and gaze were plain and well-worn. She moved with neither outsized forcefulness nor undue timidity, but merely simple efficiency.

The innkeeper, a stout grey cat whose spryness belied the wrinkles about his eyes, stepped around the cypress counter and bowed deeply. “A traveller? A room for the night, then?” he said, hopeful grin wide enough to expose a missing tooth.

“More than one night, I hope,” she said, dropping her heavy satchel and matching his bow with hers. “I am looking for work.”

“Ah!” He raised his brows. “This is not a good town for work. Not this season.” He motioned her toward the bar. “The fields have been picked, and there aren’t many shops. Other than mine, of course—few travelers, but everyone always wants to drink.” He laughed, producing a bottle of sake from under the bar, presenting it to her with a practiced flourish.

She laughed. “Thank you.” As he poured a cup, she leaned forward, brushing a lock of fine sable hair away from her golden eyes. “Surely there’s some work here. This town looks like it’s at least several hundred people.”

“Was,” he corrected, setting the cup before her.

The wolf nodded in thanks and sipped at the rice wine. Her nose had told her when he’d opened the bottle that the sake wasn’t very good, and a taste confirmed that. But it was drinkable. “What happened?”

He shrugged. “They have gone to the capital city, perhaps. As long as they are paying for Lord Tama’s glorious cultural center they might as well benefit from it, yes?” He laughed.

“He’s the area’s governor? High taxes, then?”

“Double this year from the last, and that double what it was the year before.” The cat shrugged, then glanced toward one occupied table. “But enough of that.” He grunted thoughtfully, and topped off her sake cup as he continued speaking. “You are looking for any odd job?”

The wolf looked in the direction of his glance to a rat and a fox, neither of whom appeared to be listening. She turned back to the innkeeper. “I have money for room and food here. I need room and food in the next town.”

“So you travel alone, from town to town? That’s unusual for women.”

“So I’m told,” she said with a soft smile.

“Hmm.” He tapped his fingers on the bar. “Do you weave?”

“I can.”

He nodded. “In the morning, then, I’ll take you to Leiko. One of her girls is gone, and Tama has a large order in, I hear. They could use help. She has been pestering me to lend her my grand-daughter.” He shook his head, and topped off her sake again. “What’s your name?”

“Hisae.”

“Nice to meet you, wandering wolf Hisae.” He laughed. “I’m Kisho. Finish that and I’ll show you to your room, then get you some dinner.”

At sunrise, Kisho led Hisae to the weaver’s. He had not exaggerated; the storefront was one of the only open businesses. As they walked past rows of low angled roofs, he explained it had been owned by Leiko’s husband, but she’d done all the work from directing the looms to the accounting. When he’d recently died, she took over the whole operation.

Leiko was an older fox woman, not unattractive but with a face too severe to live up the race’s reputation for ethereal beauty. As Kisho made introductions, she appraised Hisae with clear suspicion. “And how much experience with a loom have you had, Hisae? I’ve heard of no itinerant weavers before.” She left the implication that a *good* weaver would have a permanent job unspoken.

“Enough to do simple work and follow directions well,” the wolf replied. She’d changed into nicer clothes than yesterday, but found herself wishing for just one of the fine kimonos she’d possessed in an earlier time.

“We’ll see,” she said skeptically. “I’ll let you know how she works out, Kisho-san.” As the innkeeper bowed, he flashed Hisae an apologetic grin.

Leiko led her past sliding paper screens into the back room. Most of the floor was taken up by five looms, the rest by yards of fabric and great spools of thread. Three girls sat at their stations, working furiously. “Lord Tama’s new—what is it this time?—exhibition gallery, I believe, is something he wants completed in less than a month, and a dozen hangings must be on the wall by then. That won’t be what *you’ll* be working on, of course; we have other jobs that are running late, simple mats and clothing. It’s going to be your job to make them less late.”

Hisae nodded. “Very well, Leiko-san.”

Despite Leiko’s continued glare, the wolf settled into a rhythm at the loom. Truthfully, it had been years since she’d used one, and she knew she’d be the slowest in the room—but she made no mistakes, even subtle ones, in her weaving. Leiko had reason to snap at each of the others through the morning, forcing them to pause and backtrack, muttering about how she hoped no one at Tama’s palace knew any better than the girls did about what constituted high quality work. But while she grumbled at Hisae for her lack of speed at first, that soon stopped.

It was well after lunch—provided by Leiko, only plain rice with a single chicken wing—when the rat she had seen the night before swaggered into the room. Now he wore rich garments, tailored to suggest armor without being as restrictive—or protective. A samurai’s swords hung at his side. One would think he was striding onto the battlefield, rather than into a room full of women with looms.

“Lord Rafu wishes to know if the banners are ready,” he announced, without looking at Leiko.

The fox’s ears had flattened the moment the rat entered. “He will know as soon as they are, sir.”

Picking up the edge of one bolt of fabric still on a loom, he studied it, then tugged it up closer to his face. The loom clattered angrily, the cloth unravelling at the end. The weaver bit her lip.

"What?" the rat said, dropping the cloth and glaring at her. "You can fix that, or start over."

She nodded hurriedly, gathering the fabric back up.

Hisae crossed her arms. The motion drew the rat's eye, and he turned to examine her work. "You're the girl who came to the inn last night."

"Yes."

He snorted. "You are finished with this cloth?" he said, grabbing a neatly folded pile by her loom's side. "This can't be for the daimyo. A kimono?"

"Yes," she replied.

He grunted, and moved away, carrying it.

"It is for a customer," she said, voice polite. "Please set it back down."

The rat stopped and turned to look at the wolf. Leiko went pale under her fur. "How do you know it's not for me, girl?"

"You wouldn't have asked about it the way you did."

"It's for me now." He leaned forward over her loom, showing his teeth. "Do you mind?"

Hisae met his eyes steadily. "Does Lord Tama mind that he employs a thief?"

The rat stiffened, and his hand went to the hilt of his sword. He held there a full second, then abruptly grabbed the loom and slammed it against the wolf with an angry yell. Hisae toppled to the floor, the loom crashing on top of her. As she pushed it off, he kicked her in the stomach, knocking the breath out of her.

"Keep traveling, wolf girl," he said, clenching his fists. "Or someone will cut that tongue out of your mouth."

Wheezing, she pulled herself out from under the loom, unable to say anything before the rat stalked out, carrying the kimono cloth.

"Ohhh," Leiko fretted, righting the loom. "This is damaged. Damaged!" She thumped the loom's side, pushing one of the arms back into place. "Do you expect Rafu and his men to pay for it?"

"I'll pay," Hisae said tightly, forcing herself to unclench her jaws and fists.

"How? More weaving, until another thug or Rafu himself does more than knock the wind from you? No. Just get out," Leiko said with an exasperated sigh. "Get out, Hisae, for your own good."

"You hold a knife well," Kisho said, watching Hisae chop a cabbage. His grand-daughter, Kunko, was also in the kitchen, although she spent more time staring at the wolf wide-eyed than cleaning. Truly, Kisho didn't need more help, but he had offered this in exchange for room and board, so she could at least leave town no poorer than when she arrived.

"I've had practice."

The cat nodded. "Yes, that is clear." He looked at her so searchingly that she stopped, turning to meet his gaze.

After a moment he laughed, turning back to his own chore. "It is a shame your tongue is as sharp as that blade, Hisae-san."

Her ears folded back. "That rat is a thug."

"That rat," he grunted, "is a samurai, Rafu's second-in-command."

She scowled. "He is no samurai." She finished chopping in a blur of flashing steel.

Perhaps everyone always wanted to drink, but it seemed few people wanted lunch. She helped the innkeeper cook, too, trying to follow his exhortations of "More soy! More ginger! You season like a timid old man!" It seemed like *much* too much ginger, but his food—and hers, with his guidance—was among the best she'd had outside the royal court.

It was late afternoon when Kunko called for Kisho to come to the dining room, saying that "some men" had come to see him. When Hisae heard his voice raised a few minutes later, though, she hurried out of the kitchen herself, knife in hand.

The rat stood there, now with the burly fox she'd first seen him with. The fox's arm wrapped around Kunko; the girl's ears were folded back flat, tail curled about her leg. Hisae sucked in her breath sharply, fist clenching.

"You again!" the rat exclaimed when he saw Hisae. "First an incompetent weaver, now an incompetent cook? Go back to your chopping and leave us to our dealings."

Kisho growled. "I *cannot* pay you that much even if I would."

"Then your grand-daughter will be in service to Ryu for the time it takes you to raise that money."

"From thievery to kidnapping?" Hisae said, voice low, trembling with restrained anger. "And threatening children?"

The rat growled. "I have had *quite* enough of you, wolf maid. If you speak again, someone will be hurt." He glanced at Kunko; Ryu grinned, drawing a dagger. The cat whimpered, but the fox held her fast.

Kisho spoke angrily, but his voice shook. "Let her go and I will get your money."

"I've already told you how this will work, Kisho-san."

"I will not accept that!"

The rat sneered. "It wasn't an offer. You're willing to risk your grand-daughter? You've already lost her ear." He nodded curtly to Ryu. The fox grabbed the girl's left ear, pulled it up hard, and his blade flashed. Kunko screamed, drowning out Kisho's cry as blood spattered across her.

And she kept screaming, along with the fox. The blood wasn't hers. Her captor had a kitchen knife where his right eye had been, buried to the hilt. His own knife fell out of his hand, and he dropped to the ground.

Kunko fled, wailing at the top of her lungs. Both Kisho and the rat samurai stared at Hisae.

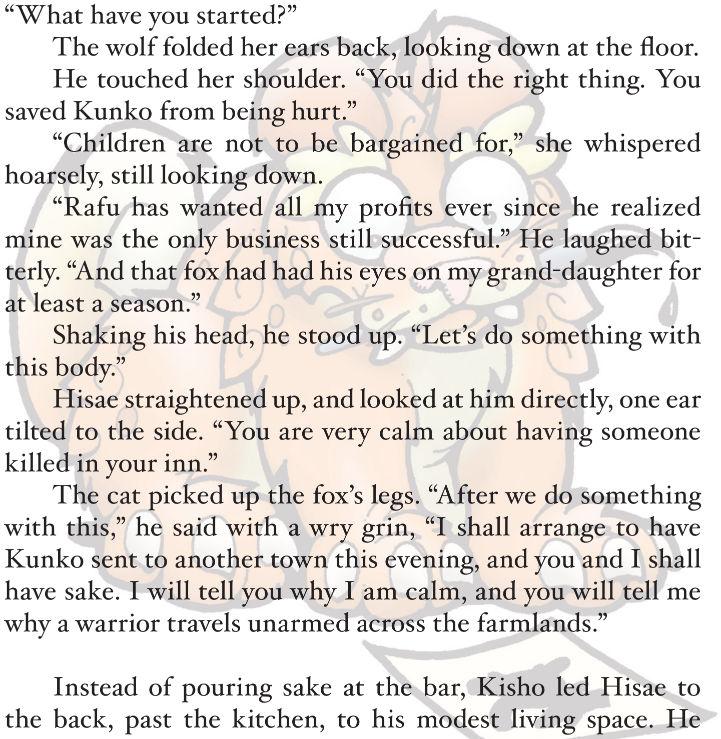
"I didn't speak," she said.

The rat's ears went flat, and he drew his katana, yelling and charging toward her. She leapt out of the way of his strikes, once, twice, a third time, forcing him to spin around as he slashed repeatedly where the wolf had been a moment before. After the third miss, she dove at his legs, and he toppled, his sword underneath him. She spun around and shoved her foot on his back, hard, knocking the breath out of him this time. "Samurai," she growled, "do *not* bully children." She stomped her foot down on him again, hard enough to make him grunt in pain. "Or kitchen maids."

By the time he got to his feet, Hisae had pulled the knife out of his dead companion, glaring at him from a fighting stance.

The rat backed toward the door. "I'll be back for Kisho's girl in the morning," he spat. "And the money. With Rafu and all my *remaining* men. Wolf-girl, if you have any wisdom at all, you'll be far away from town, praying my men don't see where you're hiding."

Kisho watched him go. "Oh, Hisae-chan," he murmured. "What have you started?"



The wolf folded her ears back, looking down at the floor.

He touched her shoulder. "You did the right thing. You saved Kunko from being hurt."

"Children are not to be bargained for," she whispered hoarsely, still looking down.

"Rafu has wanted all my profits ever since he realized mine was the only business still successful." He laughed bitterly. "And that fox had had his eyes on my grand-daughter for at least a season."

Shaking his head, he stood up. "Let's do something with this body."

Hisae straightened up, and looked at him directly, one ear tilted to the side. "You are very calm about having someone killed in your inn."

The cat picked up the fox's legs. "After we do something with this," he said with a wry grin, "I shall arrange to have Kunko sent to another town this evening, and you and I shall have sake. I will tell you why I am calm, and you will tell me why a warrior travels unarmed across the farmlands."

Instead of pouring sake at the bar, Kisho led Hisae to the back, past the kitchen, to his modest living space. He motioned for her to sit at his small table, and got down two glasses and a bottle more ornately decorated than any she'd seen in years. "I don't bring this sake out to the front, because Rafu and his men don't deserve it," he explained. "But it needs to be drunk."

She sniffed at it and took a sip, and breathed deeply. "This is the best I have had in . . . some time," she said with a grateful smile.

"Since you were last back in Edo?"

Hisae's tail drooped fractionally.

The cat chuckled, sipping from his own glass. "Your accent is *mostly* gone, Hisae-san, but I can catch it, sometimes. You will need to live in a small town for a decade or two more for it to fade."

Smiling more self-consciously, the wolf just nodded once, and drank in silence.

Kisho leaned forward. "You may want to act as if that were a lucky throw, but it most certainly was not. I owe you my grand-daughter's freedom, and possibly her life, samurai."

She set down her glass, gaze growing distant. "Some years ago, there was a warrior woman in Edo named Hisae. Some would say very good, some would say just a curiosity. It is said now she is dead, by treachery or stealth or by her own hand." She clasped her hands in her lap, closing her eyes. "I am . . . not that woman, Kisho-san. But sometimes I am haunted by her ghost."

"There is no shame in being a ronin," he said at length.

"A ronin has lost his master," she said softly. "That is not the same as turning one's back on him."

Kisho sighed heavily and fell silent, sipping his own sake. After some minutes had passed, he spoke again. "You are too young to remember the time before the Shogunate, aren't you?"

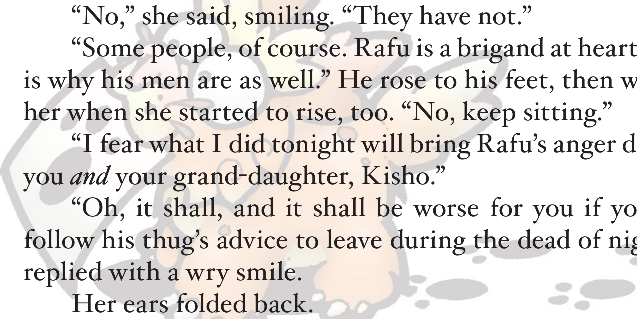
She nodded. "That is true."

"Many samurai found themselves ronin then. Some found service elsewhere; some opened schools in various martial arts. Too many became brigands. And some even became farmers." He refilled her sake. "Or innkeepers."

Hisae refocused sharply on her host.

Catching her expression, he laughed, leaning back. "Not everyone has always been the way they are now, hmm?"

"No," she said, smiling. "They have not."



"Some people, of course. Rafu is a brigand at heart, which is why his men are as well." He rose to his feet, then waved at her when she started to rise, too. "No, keep sitting."

"I fear what I did tonight will bring Rafu's anger down on you *and* your grand-daughter, Kisho."

"Oh, it shall, and it shall be worse for you if you don't follow his thug's advice to leave during the dead of night," he replied with a wry smile.

Her ears folded back.

The innkeeper headed toward the other side of the room, crouching in front of a chest there. As he worked the lock, he kept speaking. "Hisae, I told you, the most you have changed is the timing. Perhaps it would have happened next season rather than tomorrow, but it would have happened."

She nodded, closing her eyes and grunting softly. "Yet I have still caused trouble, and it seems I must compound the insult by leaving quickly."

Chuckling, he looked back at her. "No matter what romance poets weave about honor and redemption, my friend, staying alive is no insult. I owe *you* a debt." He opened the chest, and lifted out something tied in cloth, balancing it across both palms. Rising carefully to his feet, he walked to the table and set it down between them. "I think this shall be good recompense."

"Kisho-san, I appreciate everything you have done for me already, but there is no . . . need . . ." Her voice trailed off as the cat pushed the velvet fabric to the side, revealing the katana underneath.

"I haven't had need for this in twenty years, and I am too old and out of practice to use it now."

"But—no. It looks like a very fine blade. I cannot—" She stopped again, leaning over the sword, examining the smith's mark. Her eyes grew very wide. "This is a Masumune!"

He showed a hint of a smile. "So it is."

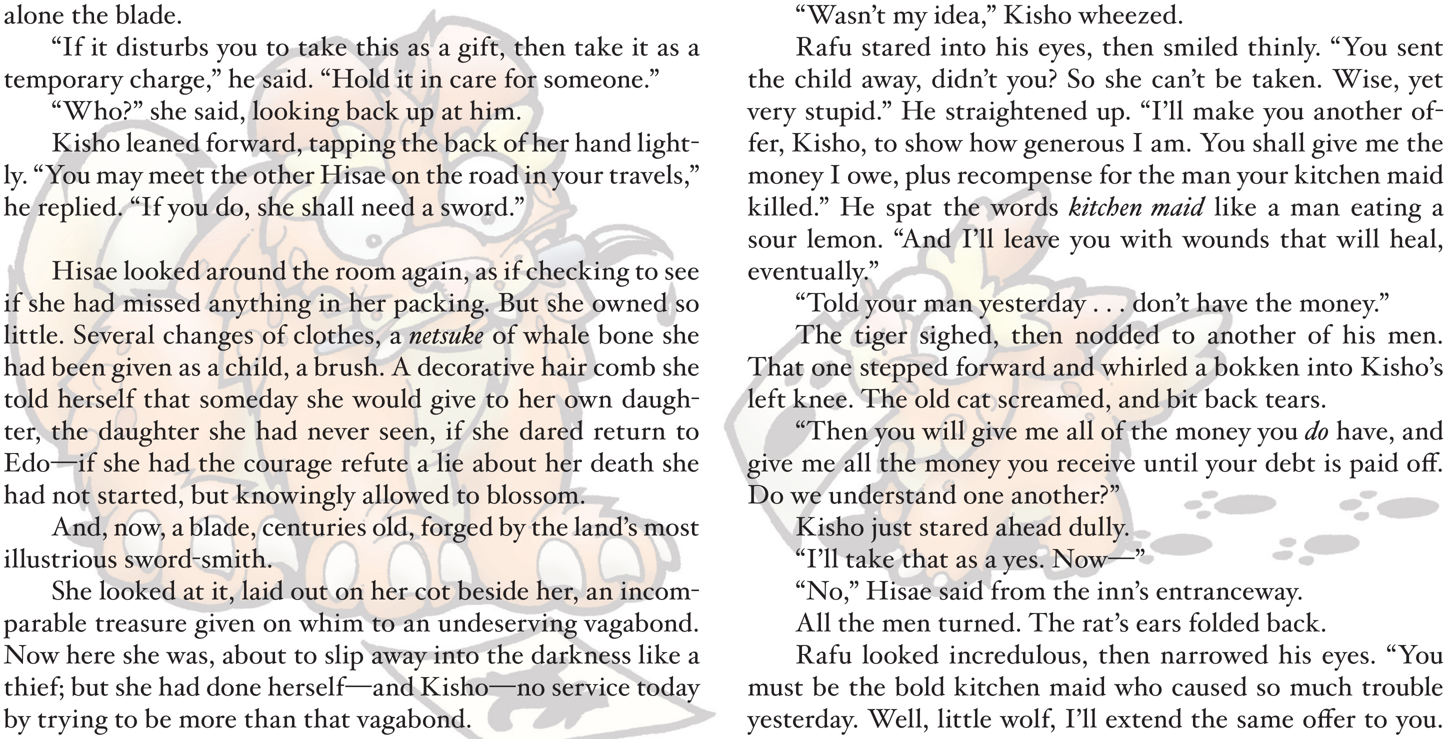
"I—" Hisae rubbed her forehead, suddenly overwhelmed with questions, but she simply said in a quavering voice, "I cannot accept this, Kisho! It is an heirloom!"

The cat tilted his head. "I have no family left but my grand-daughter, Hisae, and let us be honest. If this katana stays here, it will not pass into her hands but Lord Tama's. Unless Rafu keeps it for himself. It deserves better, don't you think?"

"But—"

"You will dishonor me if you refuse," he said, crossing his arms, although the hint of a smile was still there.

Hisae sighed, resting her hands on the edge of the table, not daring to touch the cloth that had covered the sword, let alone the blade.



"If it disturbs you to take this as a gift, then take it as a temporary charge," he said. "Hold it in care for someone."

"Who?" she said, looking back up at him.

Kisho leaned forward, tapping the back of her hand lightly. "You may meet the other Hisae on the road in your travels," he replied. "If you do, she shall need a sword."

Hisae looked around the room again, as if checking to see if she had missed anything in her packing. But she owned so little. Several changes of clothes, a *netsuke* of whale bone she had been given as a child, a brush. A decorative hair comb she told herself that someday she would give to her own daughter, the daughter she had never seen, if she dared return to Edo—if she had the courage refute a lie about her death she had not started, but knowingly allowed to blossom.

And, now, a blade, centuries old, forged by the land's most illustrious sword-smith.

She looked at it, laid out on her cot beside her, an incomparable treasure given on whim to an undeserving vagabond. Now here she was, about to slip away into the darkness like a thief; but she had done herself—and Kisho—no service today by trying to be more than that vagabond.

Her daughter would not be as old as Kunko yet—

Forcing her mind to stillness, Hisae stood, slinging the pack over a shoulder, and reached for the sword. When her hand closed around the hilt, her eyes teared. Abruptly she found herself on her knees, slumped over the mattress, sobbing. She had not cried in years—the one thing she had clung to from her former life had been stoic serenity. Now that, too, had finally shattered.

After long minutes, she lifted her head, wiping her eyes. The first thing her gaze settled on was the small window, the full moon beyond it.

It was a good night for traveling.

The rat was true to his word; just past dawn, Rafu himself came to Kisho's inn. A great hulk of a tiger, he had little of the pomposity of his henchmen, instead oozing a quiet menace. He simply stood at the inn's entrance while his six men, including the rat, fanned out through the building.

Hisae had been the only guest, and Kisho had no other staff now; the only person the men could find to haul before Lord Tama's head enforcer was the still-drowsy old innkeeper himself.

"You are behind on your taxes," the tiger said calmly.

Kisho grunted. One arm was being held behind his back by a wiry raccoon-dog. "I have paid everything that I have seen on an order with Lord Tama's own seal."

Rafu nodded slightly to one of his men, who stepped forward and punched Kisho in the stomach.

"You are behind," the tiger repeated, "on your taxes. It is my understanding that you . . . refused an offer for other payment yesterday." He stepped forward, leaning down toward Kisho, and bared his teeth slightly. "And you had one of my men killed."

"Wasn't my idea," Kisho wheezed.

Rafu stared into his eyes, then smiled thinly. "You sent the child away, didn't you? So she can't be taken. Wise, yet very stupid." He straightened up. "I'll make you another offer, Kisho, to show how generous I am. You shall give me the money I owe, plus recompense for the man your kitchen maid killed." He spat the words *kitchen maid* like a man eating a sour lemon. "And I'll leave you with wounds that will heal, eventually."

"Told your man yesterday . . . don't have the money."

The tiger sighed, then nodded to another of his men. That one stepped forward and whirled a bokken into Kisho's left knee. The old cat screamed, and bit back tears.

"Then you will give me all of the money you *do* have, and give me all the money you receive until your debt is paid off. Do we understand one another?"

Kisho just stared ahead dully.

"I'll take that as a yes. Now—"

"No," Hisae said from the inn's entranceway.

All the men turned. The rat's ears folded back.

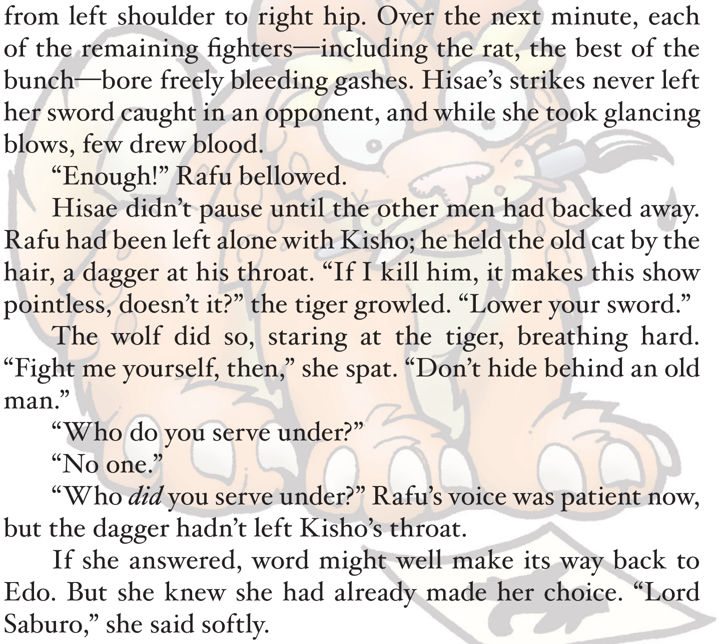
Rafu looked incredulous, then narrowed his eyes. "You must be the bold kitchen maid who caused so much trouble yesterday. Well, little wolf, I'll extend the same offer to you. What you pay, Kisho won't have to, and if you pay enough, you can walk away. Or at least crawl." He nodded to the rat this time.

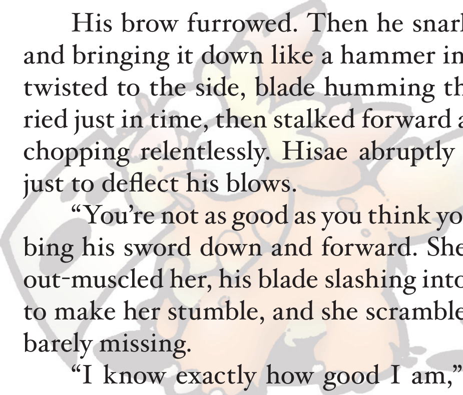
The rat looked back, hesitating. "She's armed," he said, pointing to the sword at her side.

Rafu frowned. "Disarm her," her snapped, waving to two of his other other men, burly cats armed only with staves. They rushed forward, one raising his staff over his head, the other moving to try and grab Hisae's arms from behind.

Hisae drew her sword, swinging it up with both hands in a high arc. The staff coming toward her hit the blade, jerked out of its owner's hands, flung toward the ceiling. As she brought her sword down, she whirled, the blade singing as it cut through cloth, fur and flesh as effortlessly as air. The two attackers fell to the ground before the staff did.

"Fight her like she knows what she's doing," Rafu snarled at his remaining men, stalking toward Kisho.





This time, bokkens were held defensively, swords were out. Hisae and her attackers looked at one another, the wolf surrounded by four men. She crouched slightly, waiting. Then the man behind her leapt forward.

Hisae whirled again, and this time, she didn't stop. As she deflected one blade, two more were in motion toward her. For years, she had practiced only with a walking stick, and with a sword back in her hand—even this sword, finer than she had ever held before—she wasn't as fast as she remembered herself being.

But when she had been called a samurai, she had been *very* fast.

A fight of one great swordsman against four who are merely good becomes a cruel dance, the larger group trying to tire the one so she slows, the one making her opponents pay for even the slightest mistake. It was less than thirty seconds into the fight when the first man went down, his sword arm separated above the elbow, and another thirty past that when one of the bokken-wielders followed, his gut slashed from left shoulder to right hip. Over the next minute, each of the remaining fighters—including the rat, the best of the bunch—bore freely bleeding gashes. Hisae's strikes never left her sword caught in an opponent, and while she took glancing blows, few drew blood.

"Enough!" Rafu bellowed.

Hisae didn't pause until the other men had backed away. Rafu had been left alone with Kisho; he held the old cat by the hair, a dagger at his throat. "If I kill him, it makes this show pointless, doesn't it?" the tiger growled. "Lower your sword."

The wolf did so, staring at the tiger, breathing hard. "Fight me yourself, then," she spat. "Don't hide behind an old man."

"Who do you serve under?"

"No one."

"Who *did* you serve under?" Rafu's voice was patient now, but the dagger hadn't left Kisho's throat.

If she answered, word might well make its way back to Edo. But she knew she had already made her choice. "Lord Saburo," she said softly.

"Saburo?" he said. "That's a mighty claim, little wolf. It would place you very close to the emperor himself."

She remained silent.

The tiger straightened, dropping Kisho to the ground. "I used to visit Edo, years ago. I remember a tale, the kind told in taverns by drunken men. A woman warrior who committed *seppuku,* shamed by betraying her lord. Do you know that tale? I've always been curious about just what she did."

"It has many endings," she replied, her voice steady. "Some say her lord betrayed her."

"Do they." The tiger stepped forward. "Well, kitchen maid samurai, I shall make you a much better offer than the last. Go into *my* service."

The wolf straightened slightly, her eyes narrowing.

"You're clearly a better fighter than any of my men." The rat's ears folded back, but he didn't interrupt. "After you work off the debt incurred by killing four of them—wait, the one last night makes five, yes?—five of them, I'll pay quite well."

"And your claim against Kisho and his grand-daughter?"

"You can choose to pay off his debt as well."

"So you are offering me the choice to become a brigand."

Rafu hissed. "Don't lecture me about bushido." He closed with her, looming over her slight form. "My daimyo's dream is to make his little palace town into a wonder second only to Edo, and who am I to tell him he cannot? Who are *you* to judge us?" He spread his arms. "This is what samurai *do,* little girl. Maybe in the capital city you can practice the delicate art of flower arranging, writing treatises on honor and etiquette, but in the rest of the land we do what we must to survive and do what we can to survive *well.*" He leaned forward, glowering. "And unlike you, I still serve my lord. I'm offering you a chance to do so as well. Are you so blind as to turn that down?"

Breathing out very slowly, Hisae took one step back from the tiger. "It is a generous offer, Lord Rafu." She glanced over at Kisho, who had recovered enough to look back at her steadily, without expression.

Turning back to the tiger, she raised her sword. "But I must decline."

His brow furrowed. Then he snarled, drawing his sword and bringing it down like a hammer in the same motion. She twisted to the side, blade humming through the air; he parried just in time, then stalked forward again, his heavier blade chopping relentlessly. Hisae abruptly found herself fighting just to deflect his blows.

"You're not as good as you think you are," he snapped, jabbing his sword down and forward. She parried, but the tiger out-muscled her, his blade slashing into her leg. It was enough to make her stumble, and she scrambled back, his next strike barely missing.

"I know exactly how good I am," she gasped, hoping it was true, swinging more desperately now. Even as the tiger parried her attacks, he marched her back toward the wall. When he miscalculated, though, her blade arced along his, the edge of her sword cutting into his arm before he jerked away. "Do you?"

Growling in pain, he hurled his whole body forward as he swung again. She deflected his sword, but his body slammed her back against the wall. Hisae held her sword in front of her as she slid down to the floor, wheezing.

"I'll mount your pretty head on my wall," he snarled, lunging with his sword. She rolled to the side, letting his force drive the point into the wall behind her as she scrambled back to her feet, raising her sword for a strike.

With another growl, Rafu yanked his sword free, and slammed himself against her once more, sneering when she gasped in pain. Then his eyes widened. Hisae had moved her sword faster than he had lunged, lowering it just so. And now the tiger's own weight pulled him down along her blade.

Their eyes met as he tried to push away. She could see the point of her sword coming out over his shoulder.

"You may keep your head," she said softly.

He opened his mouth, but only a trickle of red ran out.

She squirmed to the side, letting him slide off her katana as he collapsed.

Rafu's two surviving men simply stared, wide-eyed. Hisae raised her sword, blood streaming off its edge, and motioned at the rat to close with her.

He squealed, and ran out of the bar as if demons were pursuing him, the other man on his heels.

"You are very eager to leave for someone with nowhere to go," Kisho said over tea. Hisae had stayed in the town another week, letting her wounds heal—none too serious, but more of them than she'd realized she'd taken—with dozens of townspeople coming by to see her. Kisho's tales of her bravery had made her a local hero.

"I *do* have somewhere to go, Kisho-san. I must visit your Lord Tama, to start with. I do not think he knows what Rafu was doing here."

"You are still an idealist," he said with a smile. "And where would you go after that?"

"I don't know." She finished her tea. "But some day, I must go back to Edo."

He nodded, stroking his chin. "And some day, you must come back here."

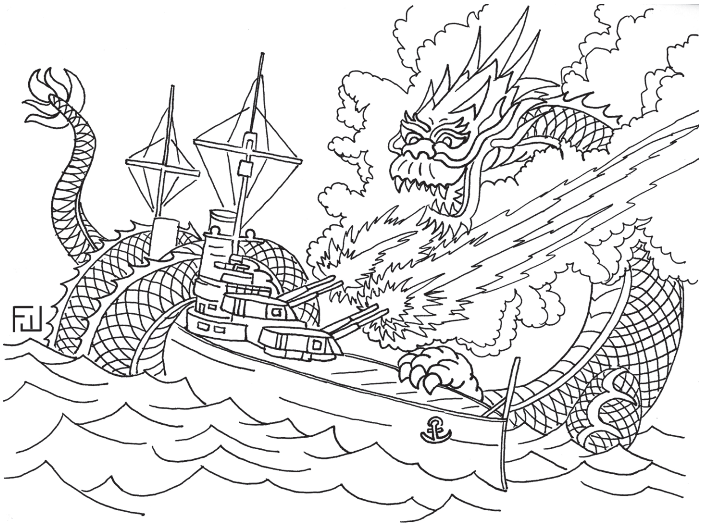
"I must," she agreed, smiling. Then she leaned over the table and gave him a kiss on his cheek. "Thank you, for everything."

Kisho laughed, clasping one of her hands. "You have saved my life, my grand-daughter's life, my business, and some say the town, and *you* are thanking *me*?"

She glanced down at the sword at her side, and back at him, with a soft smile.

He grunted, and led her to the door, moving sprightly despite a new limp. It was a clear, cool spring morning, the road and country ahead aglow with the sunrise. "So do you think you shall give the other Hisae that sword, then?"

Stepping out into the light, she turned and bowed to him. "I already have."



COVER ART RETROSPECTIVE GALLERY

Over the past ten years, some wonderful cover art has been created especially for Further Confusion's souvenir convention program books. We thought it would be appropriate, as part of the celebration of our tenth year, to present a retrospective gallery of those previous covers on the following nine pages.

Our best wishes go out to Ken Mitchroney, John Nunnemacher, Christina "Smudge" Hanson, Kevin Palivec, Toby Bluth, Grant Freckelton, Walter Crane, Eric Elliott, Baron Engel, and all the other artists who have contributed their work to our souvenir books over the years.

We thank our past and future artists for all their talented work and look forward to the next retrospective gallery at the twenty-year mark.

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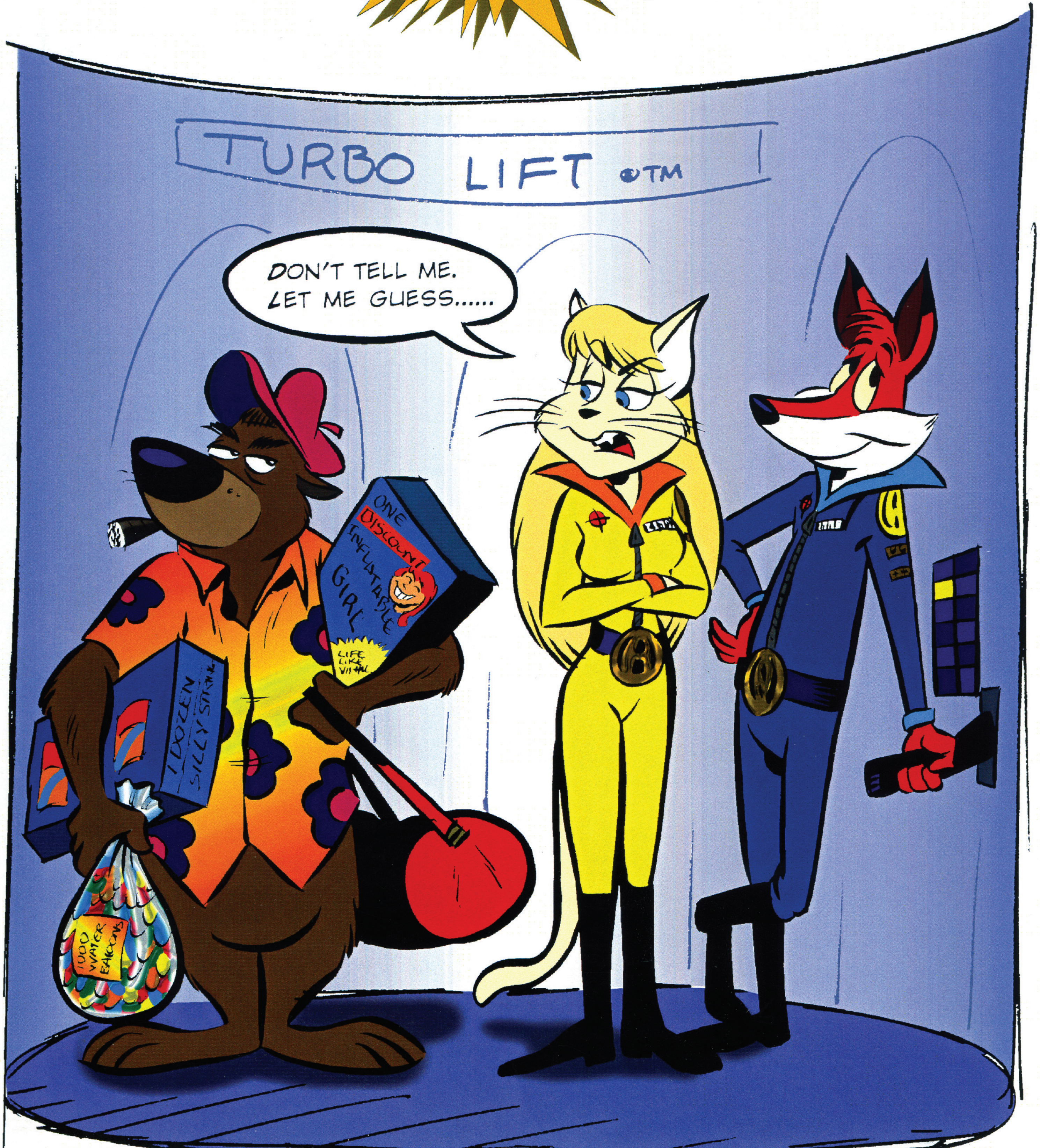
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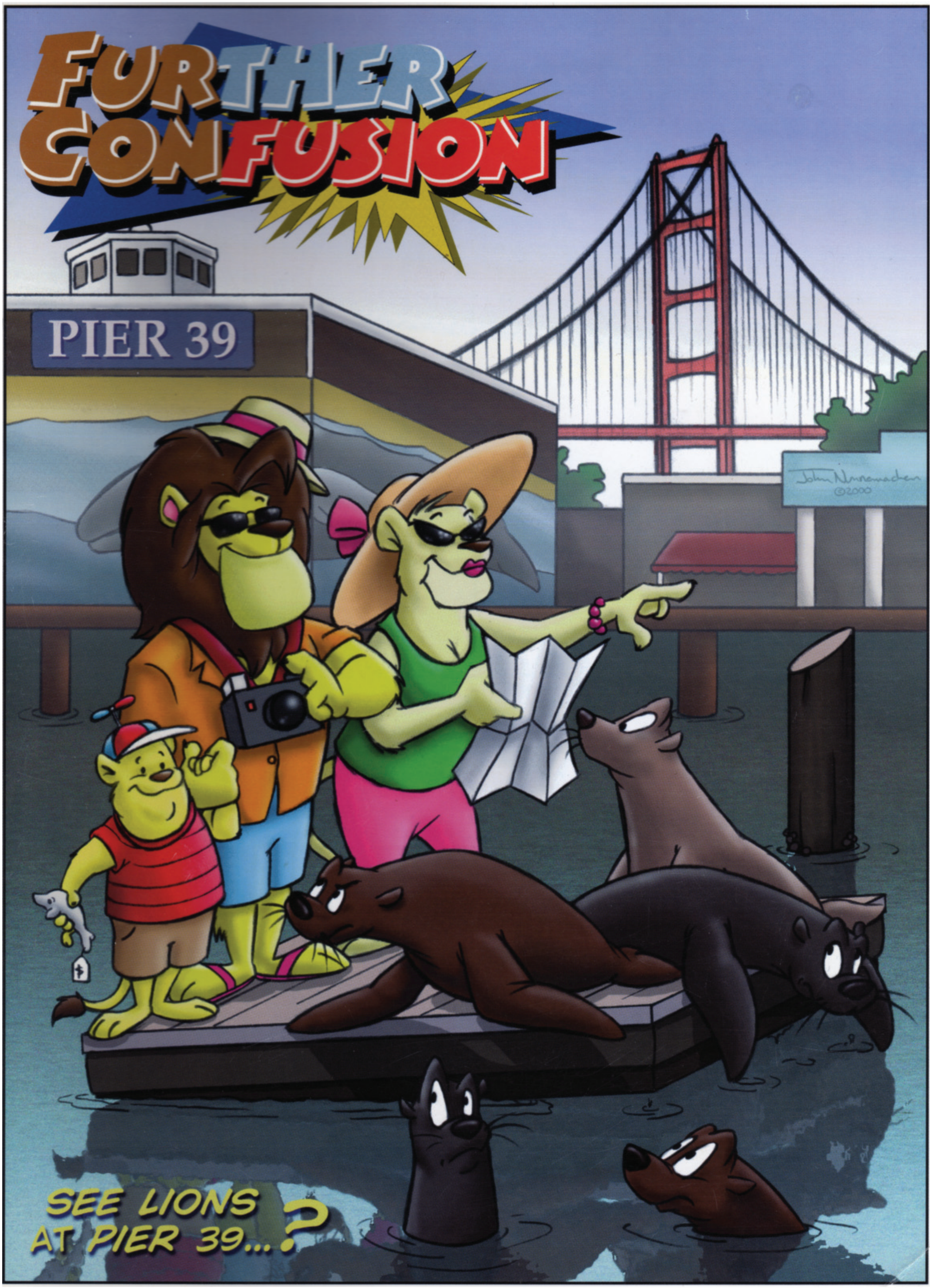
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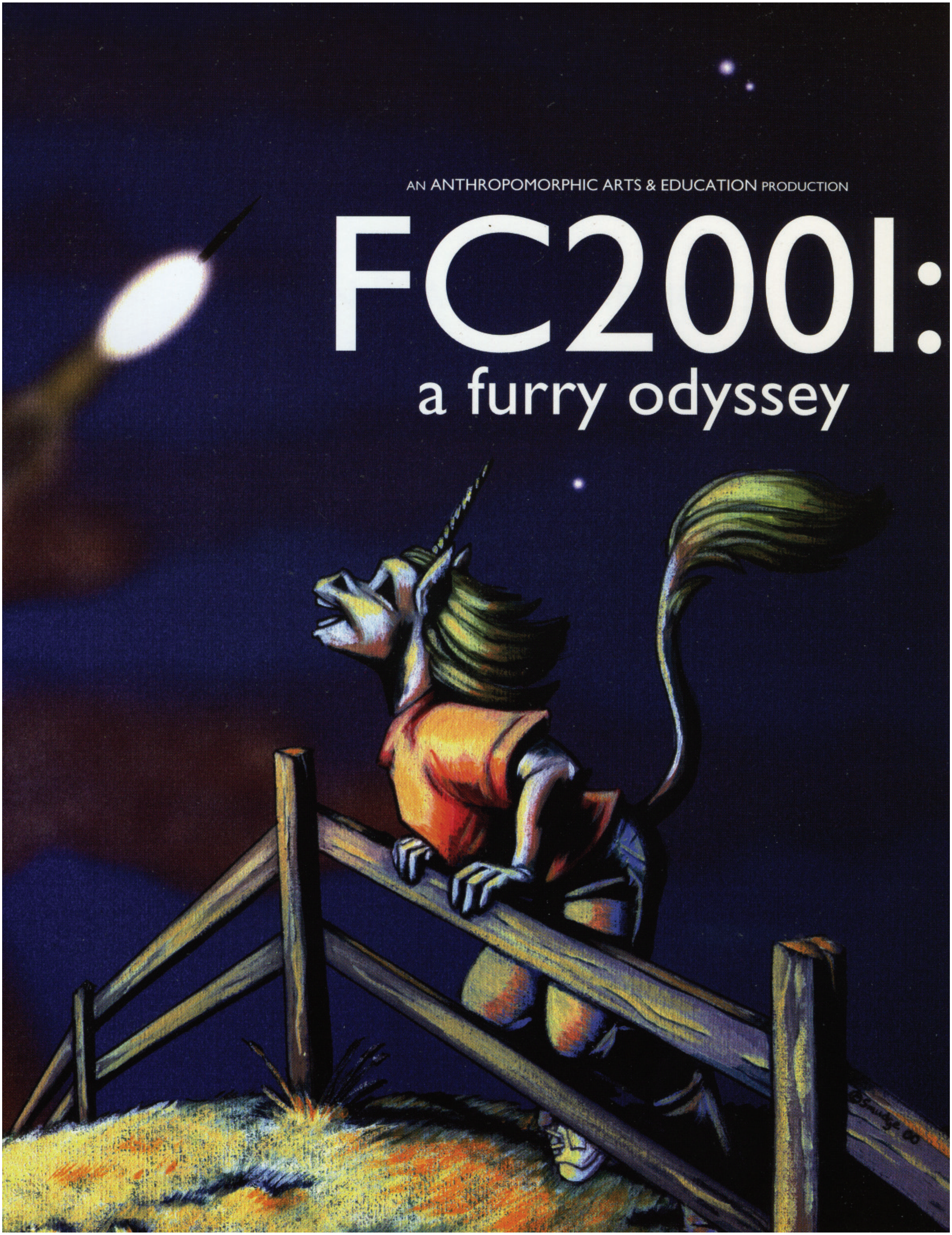

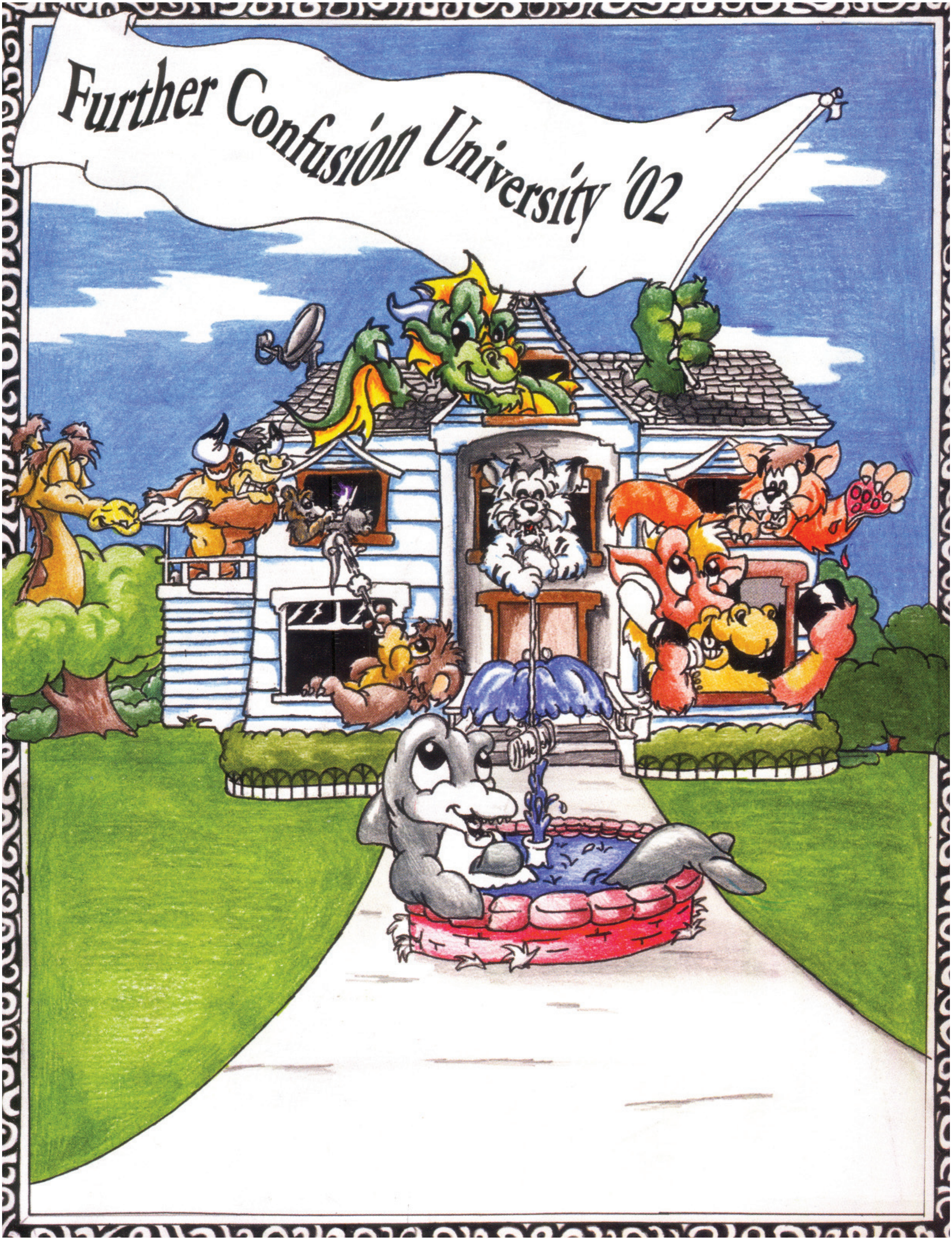
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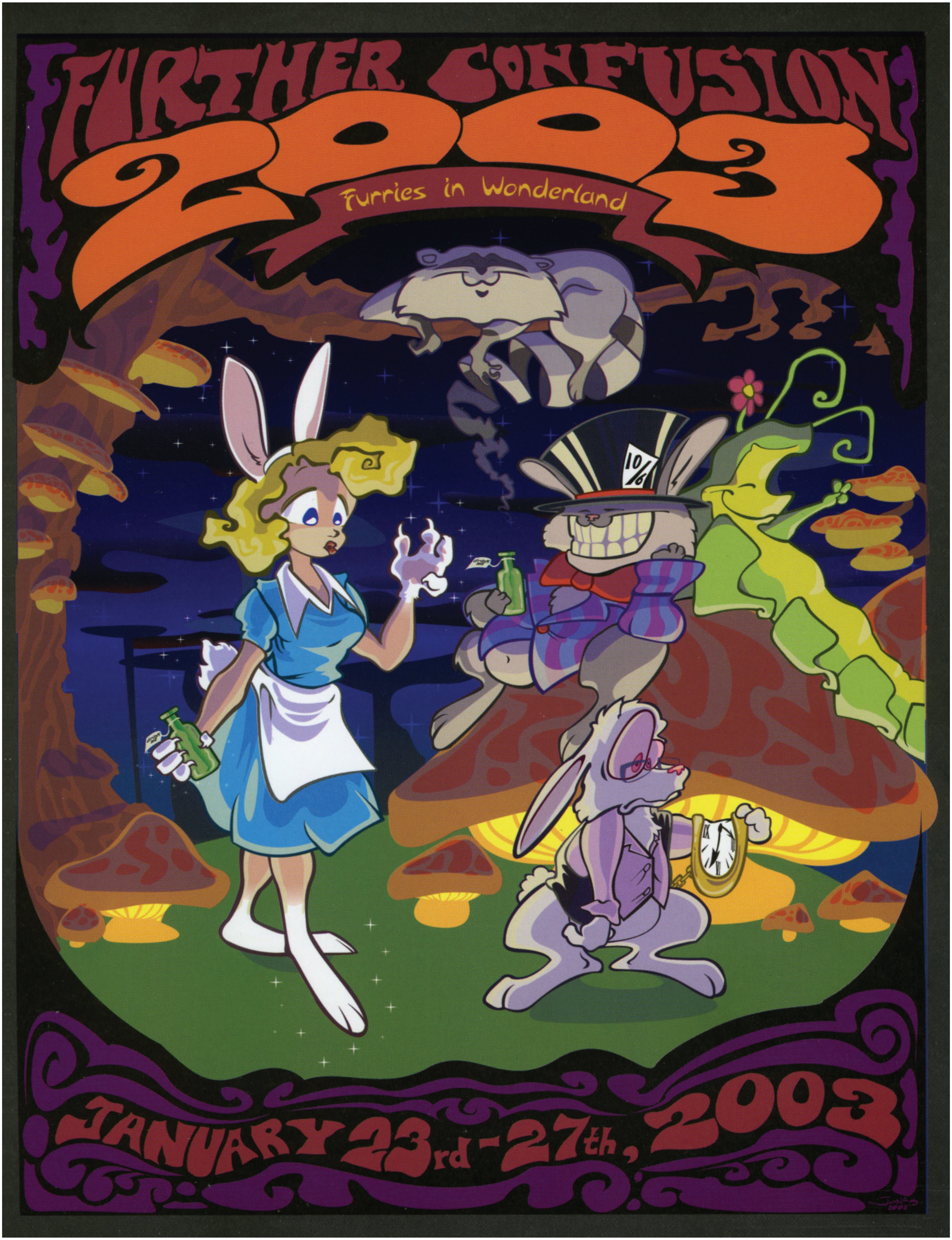
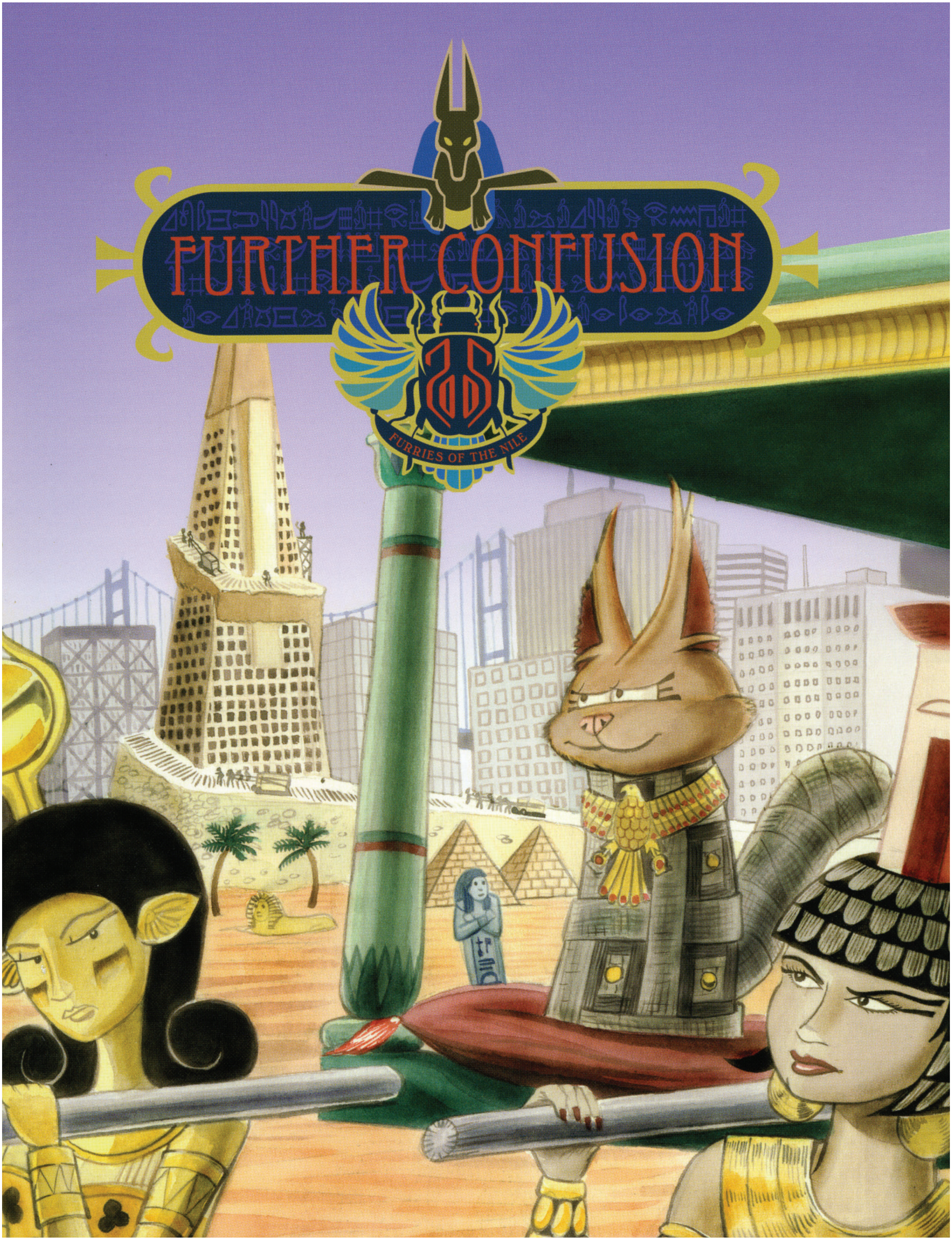

FURTHER CONFUSION
2003
Furries in Wonderland
10/6
JANUARY 23rd - 27th, 2003

FURTHER CONFUSION

2004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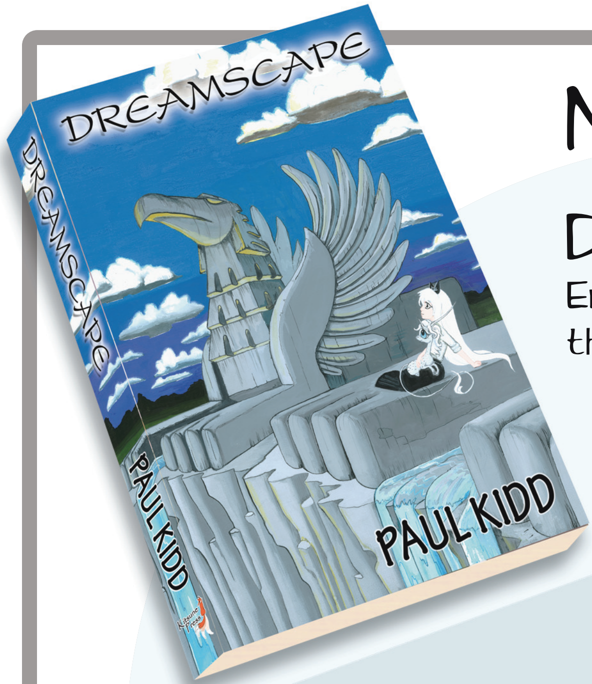
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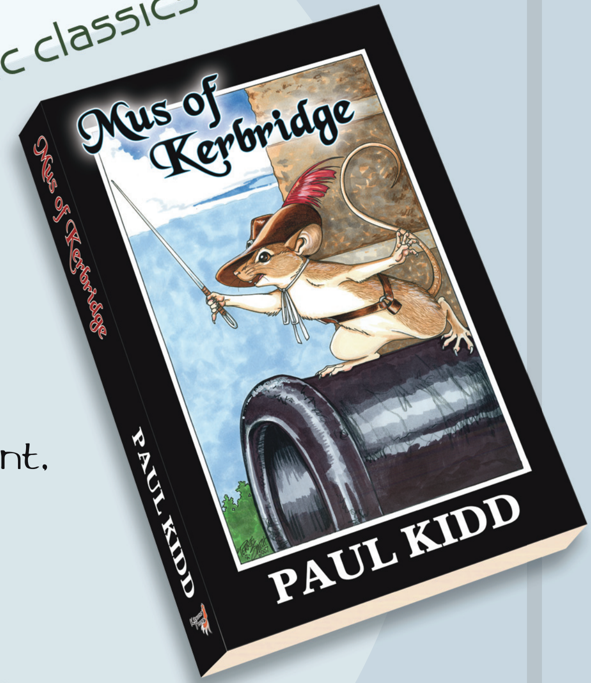
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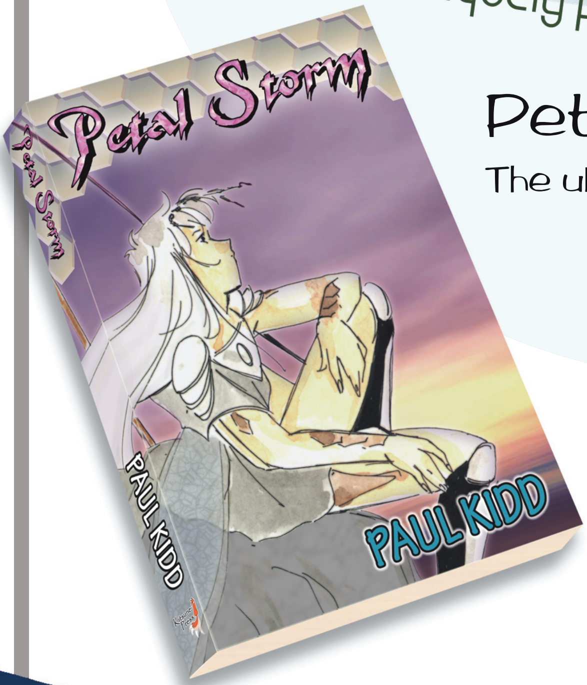
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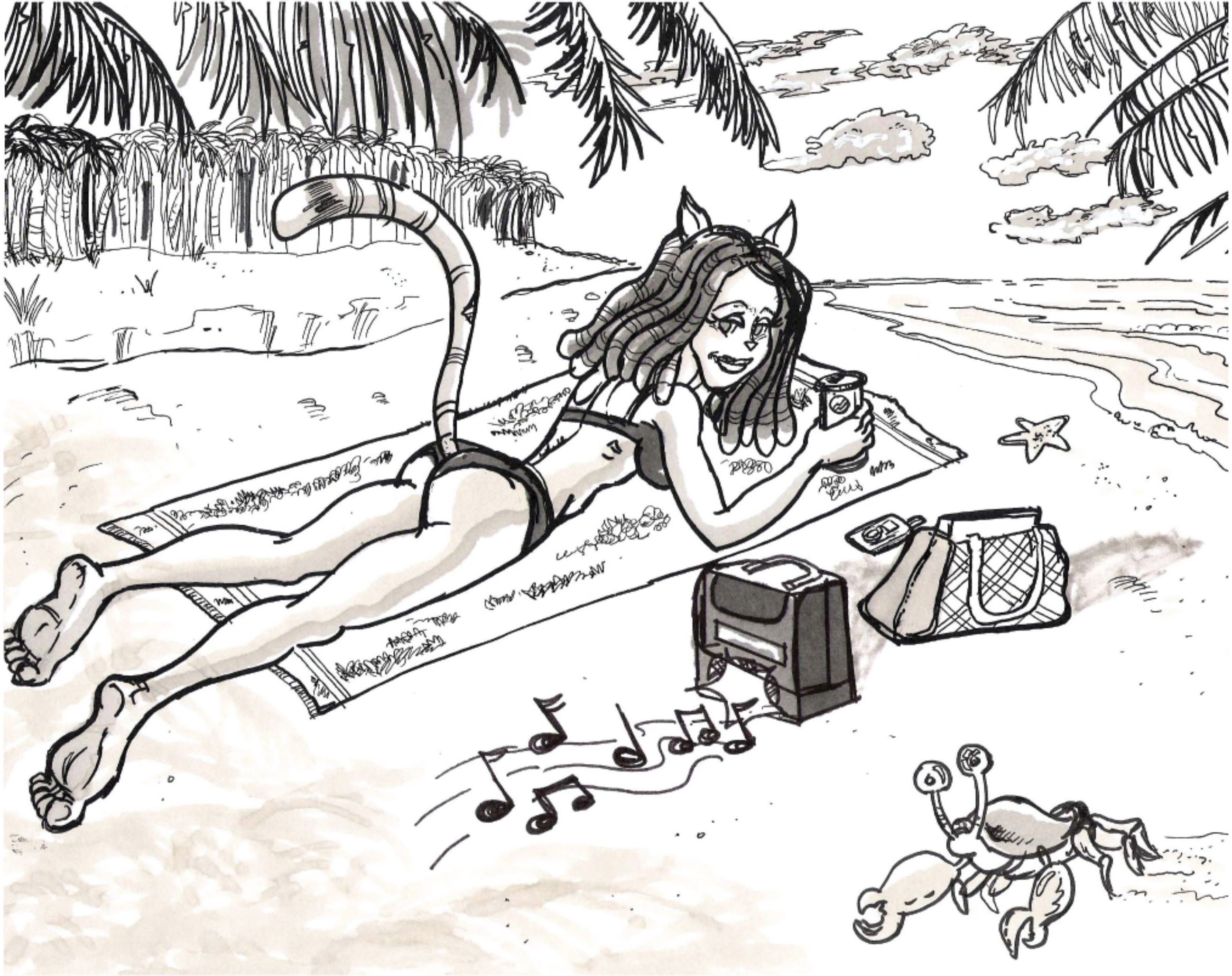

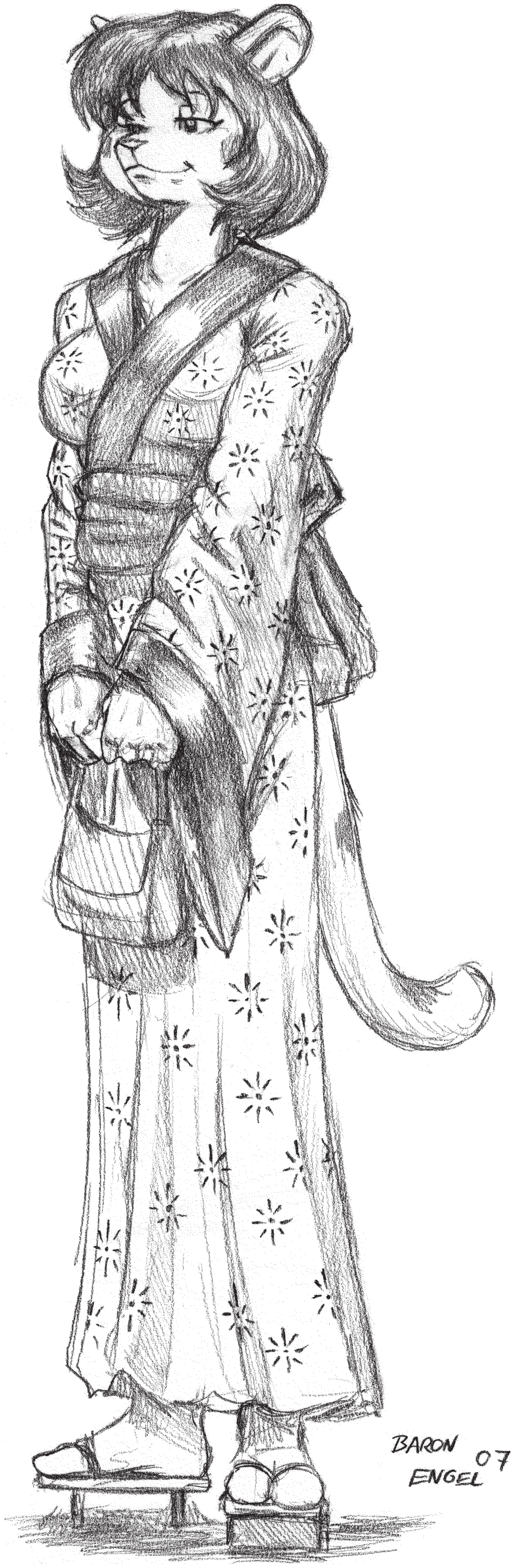
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Kenneth Calhoun	FennecBob
Vincent Cardinale	Berg Polarbear
Steve Carmean	Lux
Chris Cogdon	Ch'marr
Raymond Courture	Tuxskunk
Chris Dahlheimer	Aquachem
Kevin Deus	Uck
William DiFazio	Trigger Happy Squirrel
Lindsey Drake	Neo - Da Truck
Devin R. Dube	Dusty Dog
Romano Eberwein	Shyboar
Greg Eichner	Vulpin the Ponyfox
Francis Elliott	Akita Inus
Paul Floriani	
Christopher Frederick	Kai/Keepiru
David Friedenberg	Hunterkitty
Paul Fritschle	Siegfried
John Garcia	Wolf
Peter Glaskowsky	Lochiel
Jeff Glover	Snow Wolf
Michael Hannam	Epic
David Imhoof	David Von Foxkin
Anthony Johnson	Lupis Wolfe
Jason Joy	Kyroraz
Kristen Kim	Minnie/Miss Kitty
Joe Kirby	Tristan Wolf
Ashley Kitto	Kyreeth
Mark Hogan	M
Leon Horne	MitRa
Stanley A. Leghorn	Avaheil D'otter
James Lenigk	Fyx
Gary Maldaver	Grex
F.J. McCloud	
Griffin McKinney	Kysh/Kassie
Paul McNutt	Pokey
Matthew G. Mikkelsen	Kilana Tatsu
Paul D. Minturn	Woyro
Alejarodro Molina	Jimmy Wolf
Alan Moses	Waggs
Andrew Mutchler	KT
Scott Neville	bang
Dave Parks	Red Swampwulf
Laurence Parry	GreenReaper
Matt Penna	Soba
Richard Penner	
Kristofer Persson	Krazy Llama
Steve Reedy	Spirit of X-Dog
Chris Regan	Crystal
Mike Regan	The Old Gray Raccoon
Matthew Romanek	Shandower
Michael Sawyer	Aeto
Chad Shouse	Foxglove
Anthony Spangler	Super Jayhawk
Andrew Warren Tschoepe	Stria
Kenneth J. Vetree	BradHound
Edward Walker	Raven Welesa
Timothy Wells	BluJaguar
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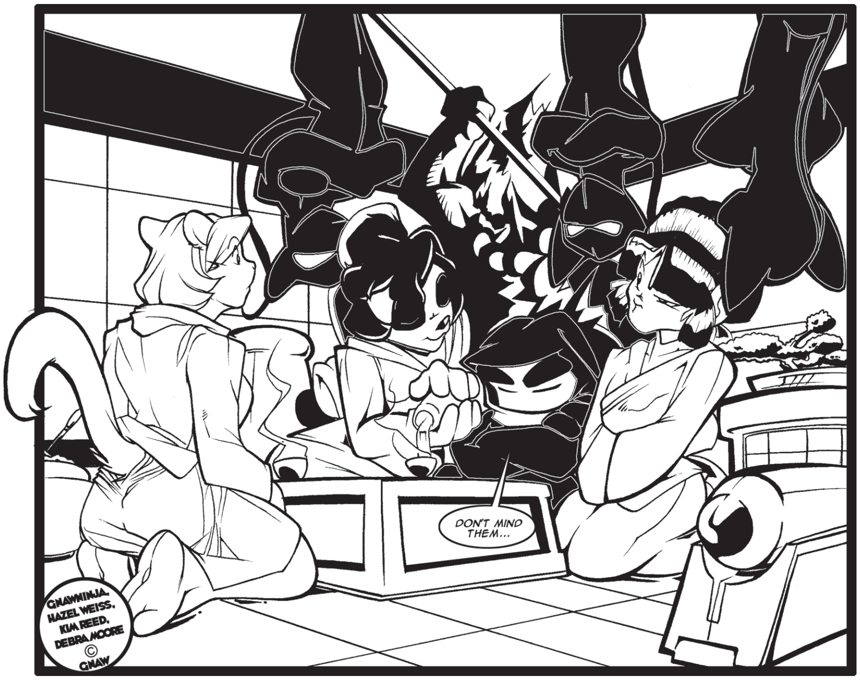
Abraham Wichter	Kimberfox
Dave Wilson	T'Chall
Chris Yarnell	Hawkwing
James Young	Woulfe Loung



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Daniel Bragg	Greybow Falcona
Michael Burlake	Vulpes Rex
Vincent Cardinale	Berg Polarbear
Samuel Carrion	Vifyfox
Kevin Catchpole	Fire Fox
Jovelyn Christner	Holiday
James Cochrane	TabberPaw
Chris Cogdon	Ch'marr
William Di Fazio	Trigger Happy Squirrel
Jerome Dunham	Royce
Romano Eberwein	Shyboar
Steven Eckersall	Skunkplush
John D. Eisenhour	Fauxy
Allen H. Fishbeck	Capt Chipmunk
Paul Floriani	
Ashley Fordham	Talyn
Justin Kenneth Greenhalgh	Konjin
Michael L. Hannam	Epic
Mark Hogan	M
David Imhoof	David Von Foxkin
Kerry Kelley	Shadow D. Wolf, Esq.
Kristen Kim	Minnie/Miss Kity
Jennifer Lang	Gwen
Martin Law	Utahrvarus
Shon Lawty	Snowmeow
James Lenigk	Fyx
Gary Maldaver	Grex
Paul McNutt	Pokey
Nicolai Zenoa Meservy	RaveHusky
Michael Miller	Michael
Paul Minturn	Woyro
Sarah Nordstrom	Saelyc
Jason Oberman	Jivewriter a.k.a. Jobe
Demasti Orlando	Raptor Red
Sean Piche	The Dragoneer
Michael Sawyer	Aetobatus
Jodie Scott	Angel Blaze
Michael Setzer	Ba'ar
Tony Spangler	Super Jayhawk
Kenneth James Vetree	BradHound
Edward Walker	Raven Welesa
Dave Wilson	T'Chall
James Young	Woulfe Loung

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All of Our Brother and Sister Conventions
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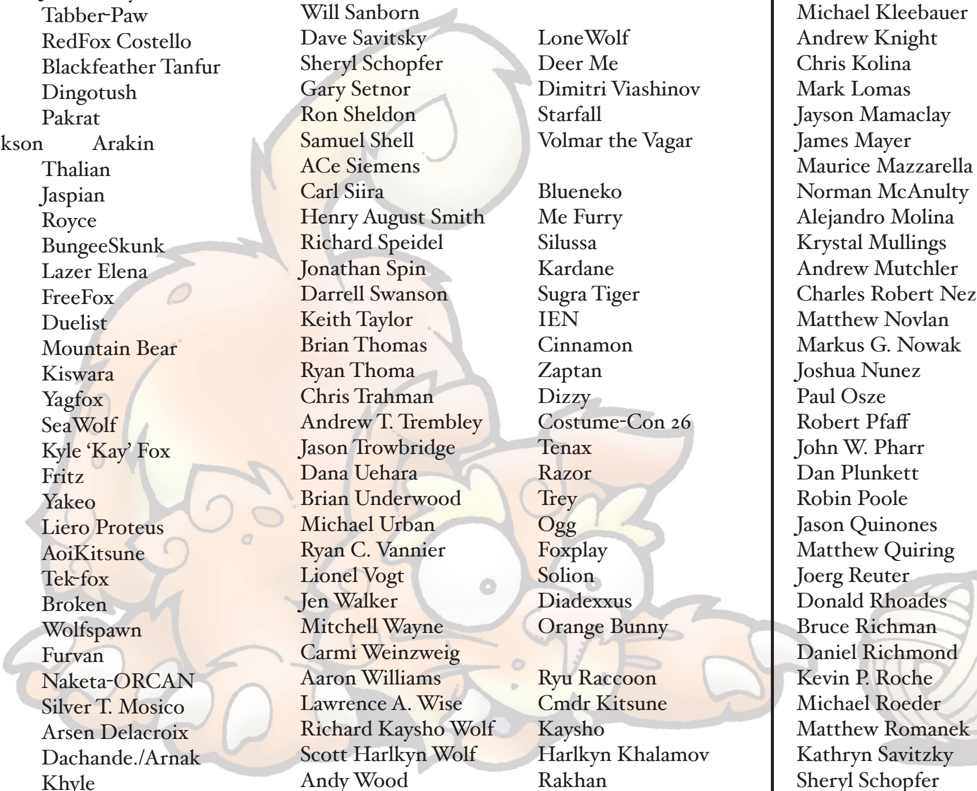

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David Batten	Septerra
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Zachary Brooks	Sorin
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Zachary Hudson	Khyle
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Benjamin Kim	Firewolf
Kevin Knapke	Kryphos
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Chris Kolina	Shutaro Highwind
Dale Koopman	Voychael
Dirk Lang	Lynard
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Matthew Lopez	Delako
Mark Lomas	Badgerguy
Robert Lombardi	Shadow Pup
Jayson Mamaclay	JD 'JappoDawg' Puppy
Darcella Marshal	Serena Kitty
Watts Martin	Chipotle
Maurice Mazzarella	Spiritwalker
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Roland McNary III	Stage Ninja
Richard Nightfox	Nightfox
Markus G. Nowak	Tioh
Brad Ochs	Cannon
Paul Osze	Boing Dragon
James Otwell	Xavier
Andy Oxenreider	Buteo
Gerald Perkins	
John W. Pharr	
Daniel Plunkett	Zotter
Mark Praul	Freddy Praul
Matthew Quiring	Vishki Kindragon
Timothy J. Petro	Far Raptor
Robert Pfaff	WhitePaws
Robin Poole	Zuki
Jonathan Raine	Yarwick
Joerg Reuter	o'wolf
Bruce Richman	
Kevin Roche	Costume-Con 26
John Rowe	Doubleofox
Will Sanborn	
Dave Savitsky	LoneWolf
Sheryl Schopfer	Deer Me
Gary Setnor	Dimitri Viashinov
Ron Sheldon	Starfall
Samuel Shell	Volmar the Vagar
ACe Siemens	
Carl Siira	Blueneko
Henry August Smith	Me Furry
Richard Speidel	Silussa
Jonathan Spin	Kardane
Darrell Swanson	Sugra Tiger
Keith Taylor	IEN
Brian Thomas	Cinnamon
Ryan Thoma	Zaptan
Chris Trahman	Dizzy
Andrew T. Trembley	Costume-Con 26
Jason Trowbridge	Tenax
Dana Uehara	Razor
Brian Underwood	Trey
Michael Urban	Ogg
Ryan C. Vannier	Foxplay
Lionel Vogt	Solion
Jen Walker	Diadexxus
Mitchell Wayne	Orange Bunny
Carmi Weinzweig	
Aaron Williams	Ryu Raccoon
Lawrence A. Wise	Cmdr Kitsune
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Brian Buckentin	Tyrenon Huntyirs
Mike Cacioppo	QuietFire
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Marcos Castaneda	Dances-With-Death
Santiago Chavez	Veridian Lupine
Jeff Christner	Runner
Gregory Clark	
Brian E. Clow	Lord Kage
Andrew Coleman	Darkk Dragon
David Cooke	Dingotush
Foxeris Cutter	Fox Cutter
Shawn Delahunt	Bravo
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Matthew Novlan	MattPanther
Markus G. Nowak	Tioh
Joshua Nunez	Syrus Draco
Paul Osze	BoingDragon
Robert Pfaff	WhitePaws
John W. Pharr	
Dan Plunkett	Zotter
Robin Poole	Zuki
Jason Quinones	Jason the Bunny
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Joerg Reuter	o'wolf
Donald Rhoades	Dusty Rhoades
Bruce Richman	
Daniel Richmond	Xell
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Matthew Romanek	Shandower
Kathryn Savitzky	Chaos Tigerwolf
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Dylan Searles	Samui
Christopher Seck	Panth
Larry Seratt	Swft
Gary Setnor	Dimitri Viashinov
James Shaw	Silverwolf
Ron Sheldon	Starfall
Matthew C. Sparling	Silvy
Keith I. Taylor	IEN
Colt Towe	Janis Chambers
Andrew T. Trembley	Costume-Con 26
Mike Turley	Adilor
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Victoria Van Dyne	Tori
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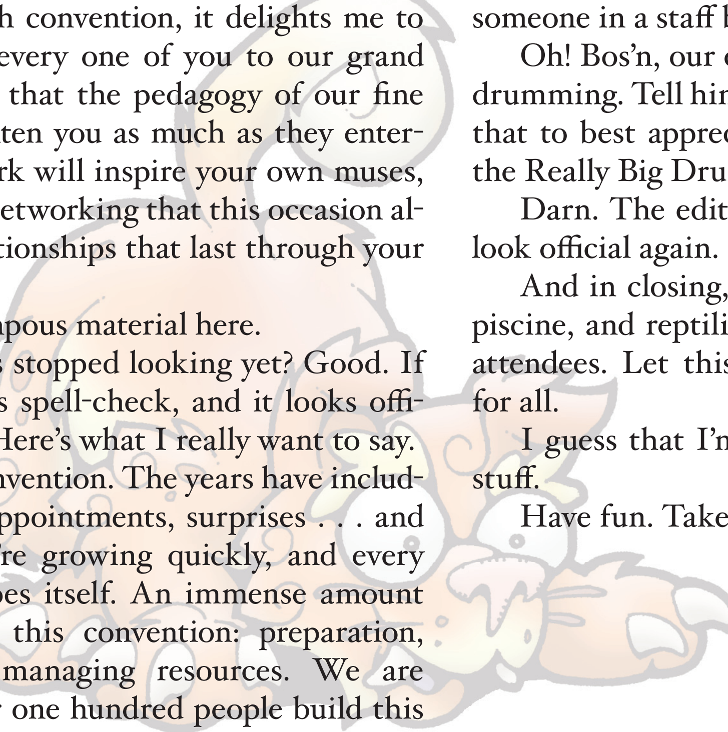
A LETTER FROM THE BOARD

From the Board of Directors of Anthropomorphic Arts and Education, Inc., courtesy of Chip Unicorn:



It is with great pleasure and honor that we welcome you to Further Confusion. On the occasion of our tenth convention, it delights me to welcome each and every one of you to our grand spectacle. We trust that the pedagogy of our fine panelists will enlighten you as much as they entertain, that the artwork will inspire your own muses, and that the social networking that this occasion allows grants you relationships that last through your lifespan.

Insert more pompous material here.

Have the editors stopped looking yet? Good. If it passes Microsoft's spell-check, and it looks official, they're happy. Here's what I really want to say.

It's our tenth convention. The years have included real shocks, disappointments, surprises . . . and wild successes. We're growing quickly, and every year the staff outdoes itself. An immense amount of work goes into this convention: preparation, coordination, and managing resources. We are blessed to have over one hundred people build this convention.

No one can thank the people behind the scenes enough. For every panelist who shows off her knowledge, a track lead brought her to the convention. For every hour in every room, someone had to write a "Banquet Event Order" for the hotel. Someone sets up and tears down the art show. People brought every piece of equipment to the convention, and will bring them back to their owners. This convention can't happen without them. Please—if you see someone in a staff badge, thank her or him.

Oh! Bos'n, our chairman, has never heard Taiko drumming. Tell him that it's a delicate art form, and that to best appreciate it, he should stand next to the Really Big Drum.

Darn. The editors are turning this way. I gotta look official again.

And in closing, the appreciation of the hirsute, piscine, and reptilian oeuvre shall amalgamate our attendees. Let this eructation provide delectation for all.

I guess that I'm no good at the official, formal stuff.

Have fun. Take care, all.

Sincerely yours,
David "Flint_Otterhall" Cooksey
Brent "Chip Unicorn" Edwards
Jeff "Tanan" Ferris
Leon "Mitra" Horne
Peter "Whitefire" Torkelson
Lee "Chairo" Strom
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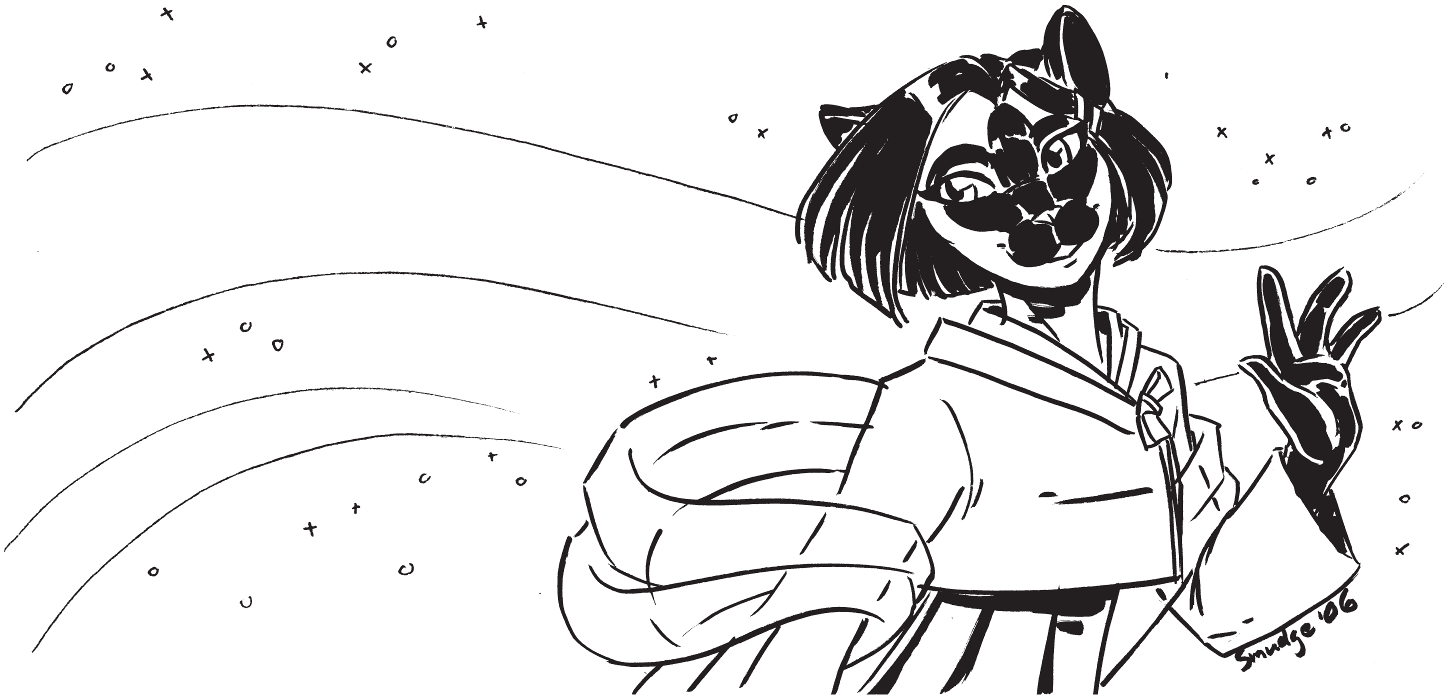

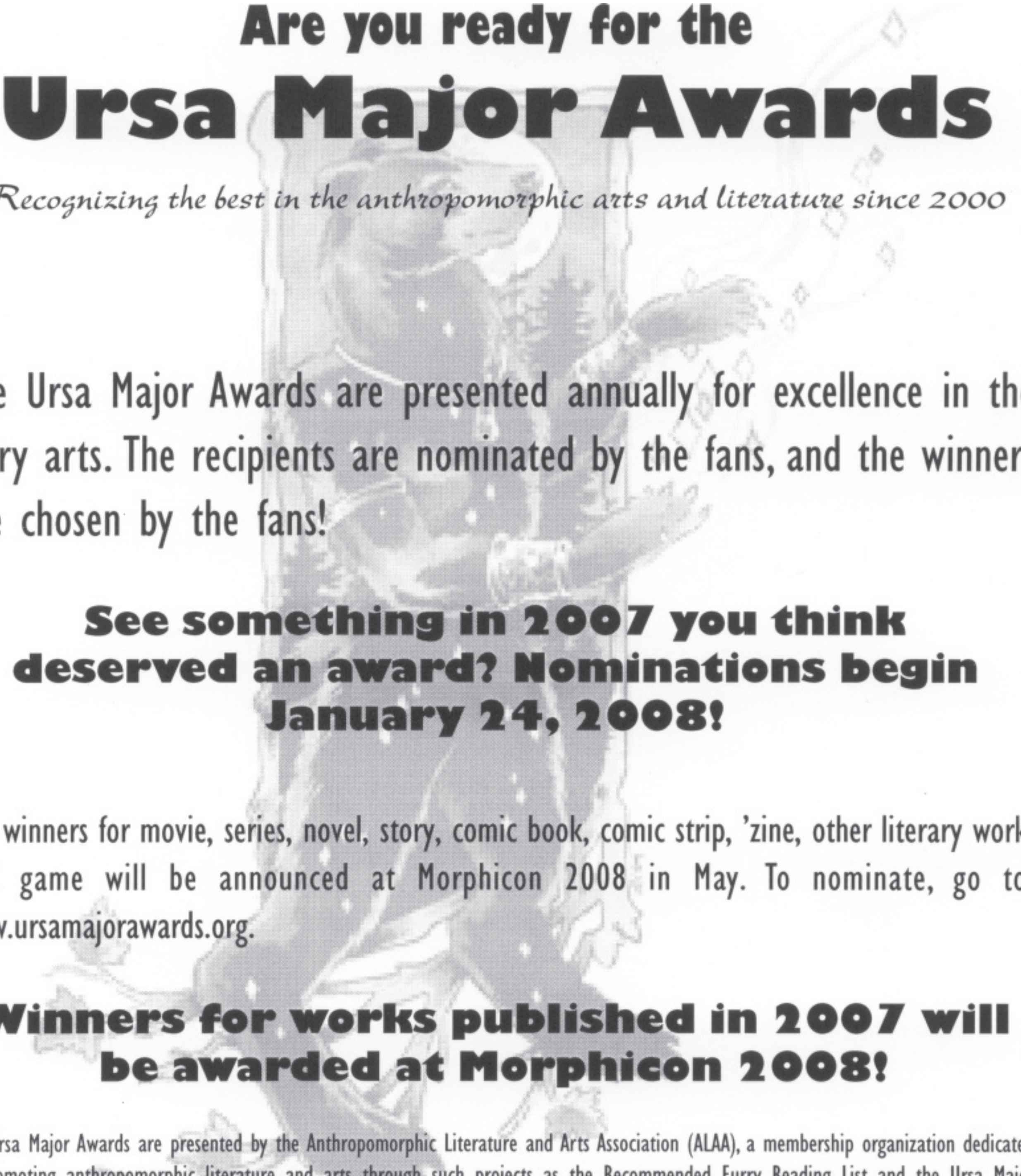

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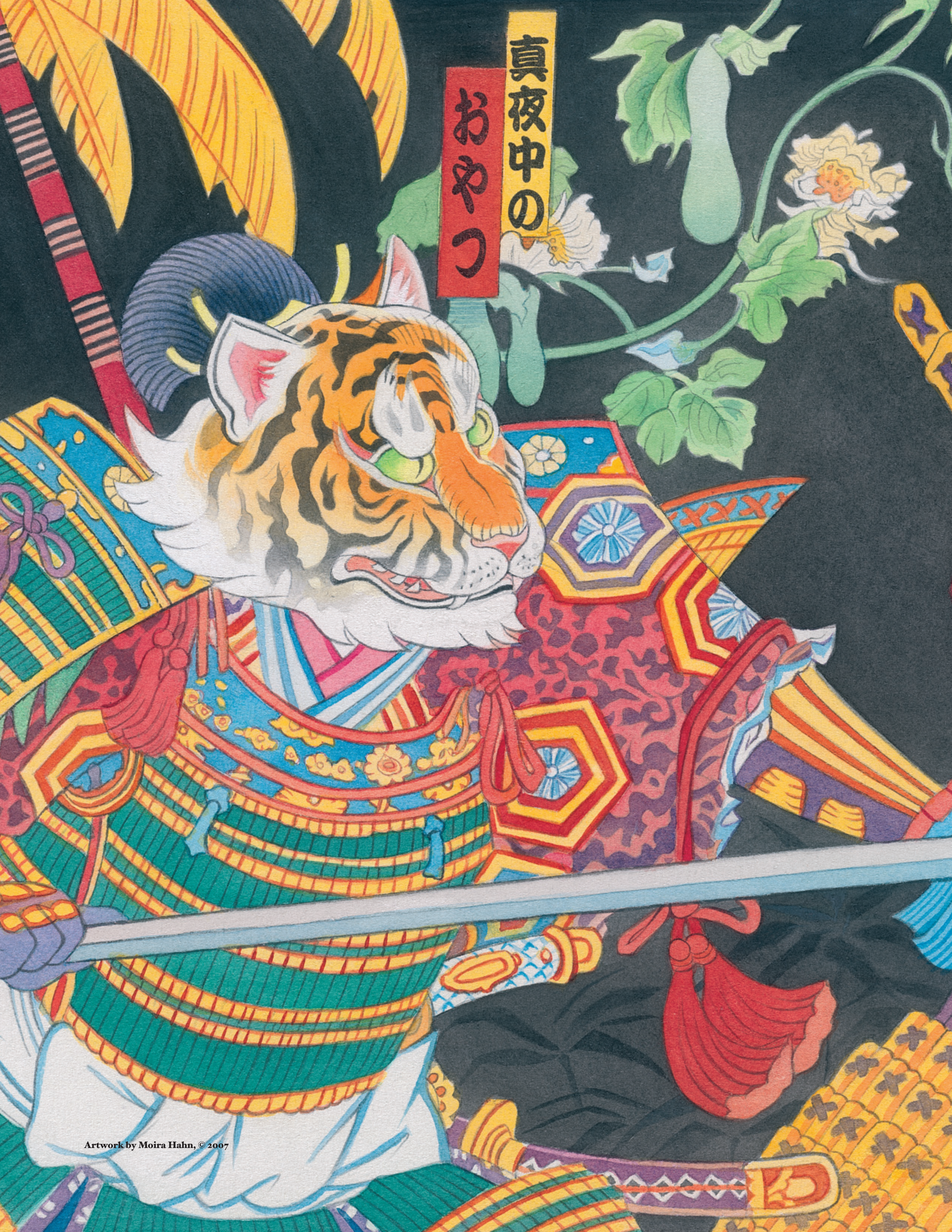
See something in 2007 you think deserved an award? Nominations begin January 24, 2008!

The winners for movie, series, novel, story, comic book, comic strip, 'zine, other literary work, and game will be announced at Morphicon 2008 in May. To nominate, go to: www.ursamajorawards.org.

Winners for works published in 2007 will be awarded at Morphicon 2008!

The Ursa Major Awards are presented by the Anthropomorphic Literature and Arts Association (ALAA), a membership organization dedicated to promoting anthropomorphic literature and arts through such projects as the Recommended Furry Reading List and the Ursa Major Award. Discussions are currently taking place to improve their effectiveness and expand their presence throughout Furry fandom. All suggestions are invited. See the Ursa Major web site for more information. The ALAA also complies the annual Recommended Furry Reading List. The list is open for all Furry fans to recommend the best anthropomorphic movies, TV series, novels, artwork, games, et cetera published during a give year. The list helps other fans find gems they might otherwise miss. The list can also be a guide to help fans nominate candidates for the next awards. The 2007 list is closed, but please send your 2008 recommendations to recommended@ursamajorawards.org.

www.ursamajorawards.org



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